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A Case for Decentralized Training

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The report summarizes how and why the Army moved to a centralized training strategy, where training is planned and controlled by company or higher headquarters. Information is presented on how the Opposing Force (OPFOR) at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) has implemented a decentralized approach to training, where training is planned and executed at the squad or platoon level. This strategy fits well into the OPFOR's decentralized mode of operations. Interviews with 14 OPFOR members provided key insights into what makes decentralized training work and how to use that approach to attain trained Soldiers and leaders. The OPFOR also indicated that both centralized and decentralized training are needed in units as they are complementary modes of training. Five critical factors essential to ensure a decentralized training program can be successfully implemented are outlined. These are selecting tasks that are appropriate to be trained in a decentralized mode, using qualified trainers, creating an environment conducive to this type of training, developing an assessment system applicable to the decentralized training process, and providing the necessary training support resources. Finally, a proposed strategy for incorporating more decentralized training Army-wide is presented.

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A CASE FOR DECENTRALIZED TRAINING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Requirement:

The Army is constantly evolving to improve current capabilities, to overcome deficiencies, and to prepare for future threats and requirements. One characteristic of these future forces is that their operations will become increasingly decentralized. Current training doctrine will undergo changes in this transformation effort as well. In this regard, the Army's plan indicates that more training will be conducted in the unit as opposed to the institution. Consequently, unit commanders will have the responsibility to plan and to conduct more training for their Soldiers than is done currently. Given the limited resources available, especially time, new means of accomplishing this training must be devised and implemented. One possibility is to conduct more decentralized training, where platoon- and squad-size units are responsible for planning and executing their training, rather than having centralized training which is planned and executed by higher headquarters. The research reported here identifies the strategies that might work best for conducting decentralized training.

Procedure:

A literature review was conducted to determine the relative emphasis on decentralized and centralized training in the Army since the 1970s, and why centralized training is currently the common mode of Army training. To ascertain how decentralized training can be executed successfully, 14 leaders from the Opposing Force (OPFOR) at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) were interviewed, as the OPFOR uses a decentralized approach for much of its training.

Findings:

The literature review showed that the Army had used decentralized training in the past, but migrated to a more centralized training mode in the 1980s. Results of the interviews with the JRTC OPFOR, combined with an understanding of Army doctrine, provided insights into what makes decentralized training work and how to use that approach to effectively train Soldiers and leaders. Another major result was the recognition by the OPFOR that both centralized and decentralized training modes are needed and desired; they are complementary not redundant modes of training; training of some tasks is better suited for one mode than another. The mentoring program at JRTC, using more experienced leaders, was viewed as critical to the development of new leaders for this training environment. Five factors essential to a successful decentralized training program were identified: selecting tasks appropriate for decentralized training, using qualified trainers, creating an environment conducive to this type of training, developing assessment procedures applicable to the decentralized training process, and providing the necessary training support resources.

Utilization and Dissemination of Findings:

While some challenges must be overcome to implement decentralized training Army-wide, using this approach to training could assist in making the most use of available time while Soldiers are deployed and involved in larger operations. Decentralized training could also be used as a means to prepare and mentor Soldiers for higher levels of responsibility and for the decentralized operations that characterize the current operating environment.

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Introduction

The Army is constantly evolving or transforming to improve current capabilities, to overcome deficiencies, and to be prepared for the future. Many documents, such as "The Army Strategic Planning Guidance" (ASPG), have been developed that attempt to outline the parameters that define the Army's future forces, and the processes that constitute the associated transformation. After becoming the Chief of Staff of the Army in August 2003, General Schoomaker, issued a document entitled "The Way Ahead" which provides an overview of the ASPG. One of the characteristics of the future force is that it will become increasingly decentralized (Schoomaker, n.d.).

It is clear that current training doctrine will undergo changes in this transformation effort. The Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) has affirmed that training will continue to occur in the institutional domain as well as in the operational domain. However, the TRADOC plan indicates that most training will be conducted in the operational domain, by units themselves. This means that unit commanders will have more responsibility to plan for, to provide resources in support of, and then to execute training for their Soldiers (Kidd, 2004).

This report examines two means of conducting unit training: centralized and decentralized. Centralized training, consistent with Field Manual (FM) 7-0 (Department of the Army [DA], 2002) and FM 7-1 (DA, 2003), is defined as training that is directed, planned, and executed by a company or higher headquarters. This is the most common mode of conducting unit training at the current time. The commander in regular Army units serves as the primary training manager and trainer for his organization. He bases training on mission requirements derived from his operational missions. He ensures all training meets Army standards and assesses the current levels of proficiency. He provides the necessary training resources, and develops and executes the unit's training plans. As the primary trainers of individual Soldiers, crews, and small teams, the unit's noncommissioned officers (NCOs) are responsible for conducting the standards-based, performance-oriented, battle-focused training. In short, the commander establishes what will be trained and how it will be trained, while the unit's NCOs conduct the training and provide feedback to the commander.

On the other hand, decentralized training is defined as training that is initiated, planned, and executed at the platoon, squad or team levels without requirements or guidance from a higher headquarters. With decentralized training, NCOs have a major responsibility for planning, preparing, and executing the training of Soldiers in their units. The differences between decentralized and centralized training, the challenges to conducting decentralized training, and the characteristics of successful decentralized training are the focus of this report.

The need for more decentralized training is evident from feedback provided by leaders in the current global war on terror. The Army is compiling lessons learned from commanders in Iraq. According to an article in *Army Magazine* (Steele, 2005), units had to balance training with operations during extended operations. A common solution to training was decentralized execution. Commanders typically pulled small units away from the fighting area to conduct

training on specified tasks critical for combat operations. More evidence of a decentralized training requirement was provided by Wong (2004) based on his interviews with more than 50 junior combat arms officers. One officer commented that in the current battle situations, Soldiers are required to learn and perform several dozen jobs, from dealing with local politicians to being a warrior. This requires access to decentralized training materials since many of these requirements are not known until after the unit deploys into the operational area (Wong, 2004).

Army leaders have recognized that the battlefield is constantly changing and training must change to prepare Soldiers and leaders for current operations. According to Freedberg (2006), today's war is requiring significant changes for the ground Soldiers of the Army and Marine Corps. One of the main causes for change is that lower ranking Soldiers and leaders can quickly find themselves having to lead or take charge of an operation. He cited examples from Iraq where unit leaders were injured early in battle and more junior personnel had to take the lead. To meet these demands, the Army has modified institutional training for new Soldiers and junior leaders. Many initial entry training programs for new recruits include practice for privates in leading small teams to prepare them for this potential eventuality in a combat environment. A quote in Freedberg's article from an experienced Infantry instructor states:

> The vast responsibility that is pushed down to the lower levels, the combat power that is pushed down to the lower levels, the larger areas of operation, as well as the technology, requires better trained, tactically savvy, intelligent leaders.

Even though institutional training is helping prepare more junior personnel for leadership roles, this same emphasis needs to be applied to unit training programs.

In order to assist Soldiers' ability to fight, the Army is pursuing an integrated system-of-systems concept that offers evolutionary capabilities to support the Soldier-centric force of the 2020s. According to the Capabilities Requirement Document for the Ground Soldier System (GSS) (Department of the Army [DA], 2006), a central component of this system that will be used by future Soldiers is an enhanced ensemble which includes a Soldier-borne computer. The GSS computer system would offer capabilities that allow Soldiers to receive, modify, and share information from an increased variety of external sources, to include training materials.

A key concept for this Soldier-borne computer includes accessing training materials that are embedded in, or possibly appended, to the GSS. This embedded training (ET) would be available, on demand. In essence, a "training switch" would be used to place the GSS into a training mode, as was envisioned for the Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below system, to access the internal, and possibly external, training materials (Johnson, Leibrecht, Holder, Coffey, & Quinkert, 2002). The training would be designed to enhance and maintain skill proficiency using the performance support assets of the individual GSS computer. The goal of ET is to sustain users' skills anytime their operational equipment is available. The training could not only encompass the desired individual and collective tactical training and procedural tasks, but also cognitive skill development and possibly the system's basic operator skill training. Some operator skill training requirements related to the computer software might need to be included since some research (Sanders, 1999) has determined that digital skills are perishable.

As currently envisioned, the GSS (DA, 2006) could also provide each Soldier the capability to transmit, receive, and share electronic files. This capability, whether used in combination with or isolated from the ET capability, offers the potential to expand on the Army's current use of distance learning or education. Distance learning is an umbrella term for many types of learning. Typically it refers to a form of institution-based education, where the acquisition of knowledge and skills is mediated via interactive telecommunication systems that connect learners, resources, and instructors (Schlosser & Simonson, 2006). This concept could be extended, in part, to operational units, whereby small operational units would no longer be bound geographically to their higher echelon headquarters, but yet could communicate with higher-level supervisors during training sessions.

With decentralized training, small units with the GSS could potentially participate in learning sessions conducted solely at their level, geographically disparate from supervision by higher echelon units. They could train independently under the direct tutelage of their first-line supervisors. This could place a significant responsibility at the small-unit leader level for not only conducting the training, but also for independently planning and prioritizing training events. The small-unit leader could plan, execute, and assess his Soldier's and small unit's training without any direct supervision. Senior personnel could be apprised of the unit's training progress through training assessment reports submitted electronically by the first-line supervisors. This entire process would mark a dynamic change from the way training management is currently conducted and place greater demands on more junior leaders.

Currently, it is unclear of the extent to which electronic training capabilities will be included in the fielded GSS. What is clear, however, is that the advent of the GSS should have a substantial impact on how Soldiers will be trained, both individually and collectively. Changes will be required in the Army's current training management system to reflect and best capitalize on the capabilities offered by GSS technologies.

In summary, two major factors are impacting the future training requirements and practices. First, battlefield conditions are evolving. Small units are dispersed, frequently mandating that more junior Soldiers take on increased roles and responsibilities. In addition, small-unit leaders are prime targets in current operations. When they are injured, subordinates must be prepared to take the lead. Second, the technologies that Soldiers will use are advancing. Increased system capabilities introduce new and powerful possibilities for planning, preparing, and executing training for small units.

Purpose

The purpose of this research effort was to examine how decentralized training is executed at the platoon, section, squad, and team levels by a unit that decentralizes much of its training. This report explores how decentralized training differs from centralized training, examines the advantages and disadvantages of each type of training, identifies the tasks best suited for each type of training, points out the major challenges to conducting decentralized training in most units, and outlines how leaders could successfully employ decentralized training to train their Soldiers.

Historical Perspective on Decentralized and Centralized Training

To the Army, doctrine is "how we fight;" the concise expression of how Army forces contribute to unified actions (on the joint battlefield), and the Army's approach and contributions to full spectrum operations on land (DA, 2001). To support this concept, Army training must encompass the battle focus – deriving peacetime training requirements from wartime operational missions (DA, 2003). As a result, training doctrine has evolved to mirror the tactics and strategies planned to defeat an enemy. It has undergone a continual metamorphosis, evolving to complement the Army's tactical doctrine, training the Army to defeat whatever threats were faced by our nation throughout its history.

Historical Training Role of the NCO

The Army has always acknowledged that the NCO is crucial for maintaining a trained force. That NCO training mission has remained largely unchanged since the Continental Army was established in the winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge. The training manual, *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States, Part I*, commonly called "The Blue Book," set down the duties and responsibilities for NCOs, noting that NCOs were responsible for maintaining the unit's internal management, enforcing discipline, and instructing recruits in all matters of military training, to include appearance and field sanitation (von Steuben, 1779).

Until the mid 1970s, NCOs at the small-unit level were responsible for planning, preparing and executing the training of their Soldiers. With a professional NCO Corps at the helm, this decentralized training approach worked well throughout the Army's history. In its many forms, decentralized training was executed without requirements or guidance from a higher headquarters such as the company, and in some cases, the platoon. However, since the mid 1970s, there has been a trend in the Army towards centralized training.

The Vietnam War, post-war end-strength reductions, and austere military budgets with low pay and compensation in the mid-1970s impacted the careers of many NCOs. The end of the draft in 1973 introduced the U.S. Army's program for developing an all-volunteer force, Project VOLAR (Volunteer Army). Although VOLAR eliminated some unattractive features from Army life, and raised the standard of living and the quality of life for Army Soldiers and families, it was perceived by many NCOs as a changed way of life. NCOs who had learned their trade from previous generations of NCOs now found themselves in a new environment (Kittfield, 1995).

According to Moskos (1981), the period from 1973 through 1985 marked a watershed period for the NCO Corps. Large numbers of NCOs, the primary trainers of decentralized training, were leaving the Army at a time when the quality of Soldiers entering the Army had begun to decline. In 1979, the Army had a 17,100 manpower shortfall from its recruitment quota of 159,000 (House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services [HASC], 1981). To help overcome this shortfall, the Army lowered its minimum acceptable standards on the Armed Forces Qualification Test. As Moskos (1981) wrote, "the number of recruits who placed in the lowest acceptable category rose from 15% in 1964 to 33% in 1980" (p. 18). A TRADOC study on the basic skills education program, published in February 1980, found "that among a

sampling of 209,000 Army personnel, 37% read at or below the fifth grade level" (HASC, 1981, p. 9). Given a decreased quantity of professional NCOs to serve as trainers and Soldiers with lower abilities, the execution of decentralized training began to experience problems.

Advent of the Centralized Training Management System

To offset the exodus of experienced NCOs, the Army training management system developed doctrine that became more centralized. Company grade officers, both commanders and platoon leaders, became active in the day-to-day training of their Soldiers. The centralized training management system consolidates all training planning at the company level. Company commanders approve the training tasks, provide resources, allocate time to prepare training, and dedicate time on the training schedule. The NCOs provide feedback through their training assessment to their platoon leadership, receive platoon leader guidance, then prepare and execute the training as the first-line supervisor or trainer.

Through time, there has been a steady resurrection of the NCO Corps. By all accounts from senior military leadership (Pagonis, 2003; Shinseki, 2003), the NCO of today is the best-trained and experienced professional in the history of the U. S. Army. In spite of this, the centralized training management system continues.

The widely circulated FM 25-2 (Test) *How to Manage Training in Units* (DA, 1982), and its published successor, FM 25-2 *Unit Training Management* (DA, 1984), established the groundwork for performance-oriented training including the task, condition, and standard methods as we understand them today.[1] FM 25-2 (DA, 1984) also documented the concept of opportunity training, often referred to as hip-pocket training. Hip-pocket training was a form of decentralized training designed to make better use of Soldiers' available or idle time.

Hip-pocket training was a fundamental component of a unit's sustainment training. It was training conducted by squad, section, crew, detachment, or team leaders when unexpected time became available during lulls in training, while waiting for transportation, when there was a break in a field training exercises (FTX), etc. The term "hip-pocket" was derived from the trainer's ability to carry opportunity training materials, usually in the form of training outlines or lesson plans, in his hip pocket. This training could be conducted with little or no advance notice. It was recommended that the training not take longer than 15 to 30 minutes. It was also assumed that hip-pocket training improved the trainer's confidence in his ability to train. No formal training procedures were required other than that the commander could use training meetings to obtain input from subordinates on what training needed to be sustained. It was assumed the leader would determine what needed to be trained and what could be trained in the available time without the need for additional training guidance or aids.

The 1990 release of FM 25-101 *Battle Focused Training* (DA, 1990) introduced the training concept of a "band of excellence," a sustained level of unit proficiency that avoided peaking and ebbing proficiency levels. It also formalized many of the training management

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[1] Performance-oriented training was first introduced in Chapter 2 of FM 25-2 (Test) *Unit Commander's Guide*, (DA, 1974). The test manual also included references to the Army Training Test (ATT), the predecessor of the ARTEP training system in use today. ATTs replaced Operational Training Tests of the early 1970s.

requirements and documentation required today. It placed strong emphasis on the use of after action reviews (AARs), the new Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP), and the use of corresponding drills and of mission training plans (MTPs) to support mission essential task training. It also changed the name of hip-pocket training to solely opportunity training and expanded the requirements for this type of training.

Opportunity training was redefined as training on pre-selected, pre-planned, critical tasks that required little explanation. The definition of opportunity training was reduced to a short paragraph (DA, 1990, FM 25-101) that included one example. This example was an air defense artillery gun crew leader conducting opportunity training on aircraft identification during an unscheduled break in an exercise. Emphasis had now shifted to more formalized instruction and to the requirement that all training requirements be reflected on the unit's training schedule.

Current Army Doctrine on Centralized Training

Today, two manuals define Army training as "how we train to fight." FM 7-0 *Training the Force* (DA, 2002) is the Army's capstone training doctrine. It establishes the Army's training philosophy, essential fundamentals, and methodology for training Soldiers and units. FM 7-1 *Battle Focused Training* (DA, 2003) builds from the fundamentals of FM 7-0 and defines the roles, responsibilities, training domains, and the overall training management system. Thus, how we fight and how we train to fight are intrinsically linked.

FM 7-1 outlines the NCOs' training responsibilities to "train individual Soldiers, crews, and small teams" and makes them responsible for "planning, preparing, rehearsing, and conducting training, conducting AARs, and providing bottom-up feedback" (DA, 2003, p. 5-3). However, all of this training takes the form of sergeants' training time (STT). STT places the NCOs' training within the collective training confines of centralized training, since STT "requires dedicated time on the training schedule" (DA, 2003, p. 5-4). NCOs base training requirements on their training assessment and platoon leader guidance. Once the training tasks are approved, NCOs plan, prepare, rehearse, and execute the training. Company commanders approve the training tasks and unit first sergeants supervise the training. All references to opportunity training were deleted in FM 7-1.

Although eliminated by the Army's formal training doctrine, opportunity or hip-pocket training has retained a niche in various segments of the Army. In discussions with active duty personnel, the authors found that the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), Ranger units, some Reserve Officer Training Corps detachments, and Reserve and National Guard units have NCOs who recall and use these terms.

A Potential Model - The JRTC OPFOR Decentralized Training Approach

At least one notable exception to the Army's centralized training doctrine currently exists. The opposing force (OPFOR) at the JRTC at Fort Polk, LA conducts much of its training in a decentralized mode. U.S. Army Research Institute (ARI) researchers from Fort Benning have had the opportunity to observe and interview members of the JRTC OPFOR and observer/controllers (O/Cs) on a several research projects. In recent interviews, most notably in

Pleban (in preparation), and Dyer et al. (1999), a trend was identified that focused on the way the OPFOR trains to prepare for their missions. The individuals interviewed stressed that they used decentralized planning and training as a means of preparing for the training rotations at JRTC.

These previous experiences with the JRTC OPFOR documented that the OPFOR stresses decentralized operations, where team and squad leaders operate independently, which is critical to their success. In turn, these squad and team level skills are developed and sustained through the systematic training provided by the training programs used by the OPFOR. Emphasis is placed on high expectations from individual Soldiers and small-unit leaders, making them accountable for technical skills and mission execution. Skills and proficiency are honed through the use of contingency plans, intensive training on battle drill execution, use of rehearsals and AARs as learning tools, and adherence to strict unit standing operating procedures (SOPs). Dyer et al. (1999) found that these training techniques remained the same over a five-year period.

The ARI observations on decentralized training by the OPFOR (Dyer et al., 1999; Pleban, in preparation) have been supported by published accounts from a variety of sources. In the Summer 2002 edition of *Infantry Magazine*, Silsby (2002) noted that JRTC's decentralized training and execution were critical to their success on the instrumented battlefield. He stated,

> There is no magic in the JRTC's OPFOR. ... The OPFOR units work off the commander's intent and use a lot of initiative. This is what makes them so successful. Usually, they move in teams of three to five men, with the senior man being a corporal or sergeant. (p. 45)

The JRTC OPFOR faces a dichotomy shaped by two distinctly different missions and extremely limited training time. First, the JRTC OPFOR, as a training base unit, must replicate a realistic and battle-worthy OPFOR month after month at JRTC conducting 10 to 14 training rotations per year. They must train proficient unit leaders, individual Soldiers, and team-building skills for sub-elements and sub-units necessary to accomplish the OPFOR role. Secondly, the JRTC OPFOR, as the 1-509th Infantry, must also prepare their unit, leaders, and Soldiers for their wartime operational mission as a deployable unit. This mission was clearly demonstrated with the deployment of two companies from the 1-509th Infantry to Iraq in June 2004.

The earlier ARI observations provided the rationale for selecting the OPFOR as the basis for the current research. Having documented that the OPFOR's modus operandi, or "mode of operation" evolved around decentralized planning and execution, it was important to ascertain how they implemented this training strategy. Of particular importance was determining what made decentralized training work, and how the OPFOR used that approach to attain trained Soldiers and leaders.

Method

Participants

JRTC OPFOR personnel from the 1-509th Infantry were interviewed regarding decentralized training. The intent was to interview 16 individuals from the following Infantry

company positions: the company commander and first sergeant, the three platoon leaders and the three platoon sergeants, and eight squad leaders. Because the two Infantry companies from the 1-509th Infantry had been deployed to Iraq, all participants were from the Cavalry troop which was not deployed. All participants were active duty personnel; most were cavalry scouts (Military Occupational Specialty [MOS] 19D). Although infantrymen were the desired focus group, the use of cavalry scout personnel did provide comparable data since the scouts share many real-world missions and the same JRTC environment as their infantryman counterparts. The mission of the cavalry scout is to lead, serve, or assist as a member of scout crew, squad, section, or platoon in reconnaissance, security, and other combat operations.

The final sample consisted of 14 individuals, four officers and ten NCOs. As planned, the company commander, the first sergeant, and three platoon leaders (lieutenants) were interviewed. One lieutenant was a scout; the others were Infantry. In addition, the sample consisted of two platoon sergeants, five section sergeants, and two team leaders. The demographic questions in the survey are shown in Appendix B. All NCOs were scouts. Results on the participants' age and years in service are in Table 1.

Table 1
Age and Time in Service for the JRTC OPFOR Participants

Age and Time in Service (years)	Officers *M* (Range)	NCOs *M* (Range)
Age	27 (23 to 29)	31 (22 to 36)
Time in service	6 (1 to 9)	11 (3 to 18)

Note. 4 officers and 10 NCOs.

As indicated in Table 2, the OPFOR was highly experienced. In general, the NCOs had more military and JRTC experience than the officers. One (25%) of the officers had attended JRTC as member of a Blue Force Unit, compared to 70% of the NCOs. Overall, the average time all participants had been assigned to the JRTC OPFOR was 17 months. As indicated in Table 2, the NCOs had spent twice as much time in the JRTC OPFOR compared to the officers. As a group, the OPFOR averaged ten completed JRTC rotations. Officers averaged eight rotations while the NCOs averaged 11. Eight of the 14 (57%) participants had served with the OPFOR between 10 and 22 rotations. Three (21%) NCOs had only completed three rotations. Four participants had additional experience in another JRTC duty position or had served previous assignments with the OPFOR. The average time spent in the current OPFOR duty positions was 10 months, with NCOs averaging 11 months and officers averaging 7 months (see Table 2).

Five of the NCOs had combat experience in either Operation Desert Storm or the combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF); none of the officers had combat experience (see Table 2). One NCO had served in both the combat phase of OIF as a Bradley Fighting Vehicle (BFV) gunner and in a subsequent assignment as a platoon sergeant, fighting the insurgency. Nine of the OPFOR personnel had participated in peacekeeping and humanitarian support missions.

Table 2
JRTC and Military Experience of the JRTC OPFOR Participants

	Officers	NCOs
JRTC Experience of Participants	*M* (Range)	*M* (Range)
Time in OPFOR time (months)	9 (3 to 12)	20 (4 to 46)
Mean # OPFOR rotations	8 (2 to 12)	11 (3 to 22)
Time in current duty position (months)	7 (1 to 12)	11 (3 to 32)
Number of Prior Assignments	# (%) Participants	# (%) Participants
Operation Desert Storm	0 (0%)	2 (14%)
Operation Iraqi Freedom	0 (0%)	3 (21%)
United Nations Peacekeeping	0 (0%)	4 (28%)
Humanitarian Assistance	1 (7%)	1 (7%)
Law Enforcement Support	2 (14%)	1 (7%)

Note. 4 officers and 10 NCOs.

Overview of the OPFOR Unit

This section describes the structure and missions of the OPFOR unit, D Troop, 1-509th IN, at the time the research was conducted. As a deployable cavalry unit, D Troop, 1-509th IN is organized as a light cavalry troop. For its OPFOR mission, it is manned and equipped into five platoons (see Figure 1). Each platoon consists of six high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs). Each platoon is configured with two sections; each is led by a section sergeant; each section has two team leaders.

In its JRTC mission, the 1-509th IN is tasked to represent a variety of OPFOR units during training rotations at JRTC. Originally, D Troop was configured as a provisional unit to replicate the former Soviet threat. It was manned to support five M551 Sheridan Reconnaissance/Airborne Assault Vehicles replicating a Soviet-style T-62/72 Motorized Armor/Infantry Battalion during an integrated attack. It was also capable of representing a Soviet air defense artillery unit with M551s visually modified to replicate the ZSU 23-4 (Soviet anti-aircraft weapon system). The troop recently took ownership of several OPFOR Surrogate Vehicles (OSVs) and the new OSV Main Battle Tank (OSV-MBT). Both vehicles are based on a modified M113A3 Armored Personnel Carrier chassis. These vehicles were designed to replace the M551s and to be used specifically for the OPFOR mission.

Training scenarios at JRTC, when the interviews were conducted, represented operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. They required a low-intensity OPFOR consisting of main force guerilla units, terrorist cells, and special operations forces. The majority of missions entailed the OPFOR deploying in three-to-five man groups, or operational cells intermingled among the local population. Primary missions included airborne assault or helicopter insertions, small patrols, resupply missions, emplacing improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and conducting unilateral attacks on key personnel, equipment, or facilities. The unit organization included sufficient leaders to conduct the multiple missions ongoing as part of a JRTC training rotation.

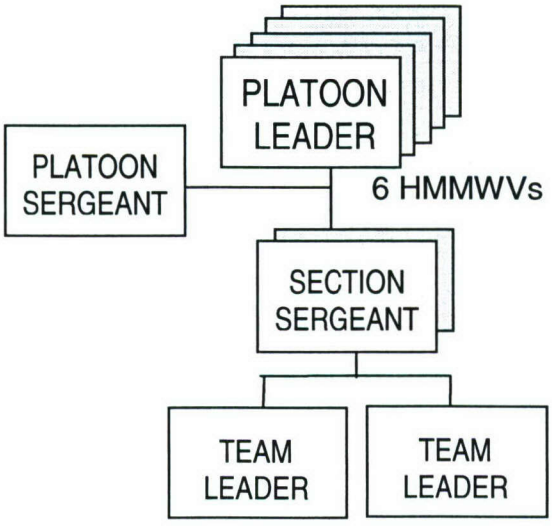

Figure 1. D Troop, 1-509th Infantry Organization

The Interviews

Prior to the interviews, each leader completed the first section on biographical information and reviewed the interview questions for familiarity (see Appendix B). After completing the biographical information, all participants were scheduled for an individual interview with an ARI representative. The interview questions were developed to determine the specifics of the decentralized training approach used by the JRTC OPFOR.

There were two interviewers. Two hours were allotted for each interview, and were conducted over a three-day period. All interviews were digitally tape recorded for ease in ultimately transcribing the interviews into written text. Random identification numbers were assigned to each participant to protect confidentiality.

The interview protocol is at Appendix B, and is labeled as Section II of the instrument. The intent was to gain information from leaders who had first-hand experience, under varying circumstances, to actually plan, prepare, and execute decentralized training. The interview questions focused on six areas:

- Training in preparation for a training rotation
- Training during a rotation
- Training new OPFOR Soldiers
- Training new OPFOR leaders
- Collective training; training of battle drills, and how training is assessed
- General questions on the potential for integrating decentralized training as an Army-wide training approach.

The premise was that the OPFOR might use a different approach to training depending on the tasks to be trained, preparation requirements for the next JRTC mission, and the circumstances under which training would be conducted. Therefore, the interview questions were grouped to allow for these possible distinctions. The questions also were designed to elicit suggestions from experienced leaders as to how decentralized training might best be implemented in a broader application throughout the Army. This included insights into what is required to ensure the training is effective and to identify potential pitfalls. Prior to initiating all interviews, participants were reminded of the definition of decentralized training, to avoid any misunderstanding about the differences between centralized and decentralized training.

Some interview questions were specific, requiring participants to make selections from a menu of choices (see Appendix B). Interviewers were provided some follow-on questions to facilitate the interview process, to clarify answers, and to elicit precise answers. Interviewers were also free to ask additional follow-on questions at any time in order to gain additional details or to eliminate ambiguity in a response.

Preparation for a Training Rotation

The first set of questions was on the training in preparation for a rotation, general background information about the battalion, and the role the OPFOR plays during the training rotation. For example, Soldiers were asked whether the 1st BN 509th IN consolidates all non-OPFOR training such as M16 rifle annual qualification, crew-served weapons training, Common Task Test (CTT), Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB) testing, and other annual training requirements, and how well the battalion consolidates these annual training requirements. Participants were asked the primary reasons for conducting decentralized training as a means for preparing for rotations. They were asked about who actually supervised the training.

Next was a series of questions that required participants to identify the percentage of time that the unit spends between rotations on training their traditional U.S. Soldier wartime skills/tasks, on OPFOR mission skills/tasks, and on performing other activities. The "other activities" category included such events as leave, time off, medical appointments, schooling, and temporary duty. The sum of these three percentages had to equal 100%. They also had to identify the percentage of their wartime training that was centralized and decentralized; and the percentage of their OPFOR mission training that was centralized and decentralized. Both sets of percentages had to sum to 100%.

For OPFOR training, participants were asked under what conditions centralized training was conducted in preparation for a rotation. They were provided five response options. The choices included training for new members of the OPFOR at the JRTC OPFOR Academy (Academy inactivated prior to conduct of the interviews), when the OPFOR is issued or uses new equipment, when the OPFOR faces a new type of unit such as a Stryker battalion, when the OPFOR must depict a new threat that differs from what had been represented in the past, and/or other instances.

Further, participants were asked who was typically responsible for OPFOR training prior to a rotation. They were given choices from six potential sources starting at team leader and going through the company commander, as well as the option to specify other individuals. They

were also asked to indicate how they, as leaders, determined what needed to be trained for an OPFOR mission. Choices included shortfalls from the last rotation, guidance from higher leaders, previous evaluations, OPFOR mission tasks, input from subordinate leaders, the participant's own professional experience, and/or other sources (which participants had to specify; e.g., guidance from the battalion or instructions from the company commander).

Training During a Rotation

The first question regarding training during a rotation was on whether the rotation was viewed as a way of measuring or assessing OPFOR proficiency or performance, as a training event, or as both. Participants were also asked about the type of training conducted during a rotation. Questions in this part of the interview included identifying who determined what tasks were to be trained and when, whether or not these tasks were placed on the unit training schedule, whether the tasks were taught as hip-pocket instruction, who had responsibility for executing this training, the amount of time typically spent on this training, and how this training was typically conducted.

Training New OPFOR Soldiers and Leaders

A series of parallel questions was asked regarding new Soldiers and new leaders who join the OPFOR. Participants identified up to ten primary skills or capabilities they felt an OPFOR Soldier must possess. They then identified what training or technique was used to overcome deficiencies in these skills or capabilities, and whether or not the training was conducted as centralized or decentralized training. Several tasks and/or collective missions were presented as examples to facilitate the interview (e.g., first aid, adaptive thinking, weapons training, ambushes, conducting a withdrawal under pressure, team building, land navigation, battle drills, patrolling, individual movement techniques). Participants were then queried regarding how they determined when a new Soldier is ready for his OPFOR position and how many rotations was typically required for him to be proficient. The same questions were asked about new leaders.

With regard to new Soldiers, the participants were also asked about the extent of cross training new OPFOR Soldiers received on platoon equipment and the percentage of cross-training time that was decentralized as opposed to centralized training. With regard to new leaders, participants were asked what training or mentoring a new subordinate leader received, and the traits and skills that the new junior leader needed. Lastly the participants identified their greatest training challenge when they became an OPFOR leader.

Collective Training

Participants were asked questions on collective training that were designed to determine their individual training priorities. They were provided a scenario in which they had a 72-hour window to train their unit on any collective tasks or battle drills they desired. For this scenario, they identified what tasks they would train, explained why those tasks were selected, and identified how they would conduct this particular training.

Participants addressed how they prepare their unit for a new OPFOR mission, such as an emerging Afghanistan or Iraqi threat, an influx of urban operations incidents, or a situation involving world-wide terrorism. They were also asked what they stressed during their own AARs and the amount of time they spent on team-building to build a cohesive unit.

Integrating Decentralized Training in Army Units

The last phase of the interview focused on conducting decentralized training in units. Of interest were the aspects of decentralized training the participants would carry with them to their next unit, and whether they felt that the decentralized training they experienced at JRTC as a member of the OPFOR could be applied Army-wide. Those who had previously served in a regular Army unit were asked what aspects of a decentralized training philosophy and procedures would work and would not work in a unit. Also of importance was their perception of the echelons at which decentralized training would be most effective in a unit and of potential roadblocks to conducting decentralized training in regular units.

The final questions were asked of participants who served multiple tours or a variety of duty positions within the OPFOR. Follow-on questions involved having an individual respond as a member of the OPFOR, but also as a former rotational unit member undergoing training at JRTC. This technique helped to gain a different perspective on interview topics.

Results

Overall Trends Regarding Centralized and Decentralized Training

Decentralized training was used prior to and during a rotation to train both OPFOR and wartime skills. The trainer for decentralized training was predominately the first-line supervisor, team leader, or senior man present including a knowledgeable peer, regardless of rank. About a third of the participants also indicated that NCOs at the section and squad leader level were the other primary trainers.

When centralized training was conducted, it was done as unit training between or prior to training rotations. It was used predominantly at the battalion and company levels to complete non-OPFOR training requirements. Centralized training was used when the unit was issued new equipment, when the unit had to depict a new threat, when the unit faced a new type of friendly unit, or when the battalion consolidated annual training requirements.

Training Prior to a Rotation

A major focus of the interviews was the nature of the OPFOR training prior to a rotation. Specific issues were the relative emphasis given to training wartime and OPFOR skills, the relative emphasis on decentralized and centralized training, the reasons for conducting each mode of training, and who was responsible for decentralized training within the unit. The relative emphasis given to training wartime and OPFOR skills as well as centralized and decentralized training is shown in Table 3 (Question 3, Appendix B). Training OPFOR skills was emphasized more than wartime skills prior to a rotation. For both wartime skills and

OPFOR skills, the time spent in a decentralized training mode was about twice that spent in a centralized mode. For wartime skills, the percentage of time for decentralized training was 61%; for OPFOR skills, the percentage was 73%.

Table 3
Distribution of Training Time Prior to a JRTC Rotation

Type of Training		% of Time	
		M	Range
Wartime skills		27	10-45
OPFOR skills		45	10-70
Other activities		27	10-50
Type of Training	Training Mode		
Wartime skills	Centralized	39	20-75
	Decentralized	61	25-100
OPFOR skills	Centralized	27	0-50
	Decentralized	73	50-100

Centralized Training

The participants indicated that the battalion and its subordinate companies arranged and conducted most of the consolidated or centralized training. This training focused more heavily on wartime missions than OPFOR skills (39% vs 27%, see Table 3). Examples of training included Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB), Excellence in Armor (EIA), heavy weapons training, vehicle driver skills, combat life-saver (CLS), land navigation, and annual rifle qualification (Question 1, Appendix B). According to the participants, their wartime mission as Scouts required them to use skills in these domains. Some other skills, such as combatives, were taught by battalion or higher-level personnel. The participants generally believed this type of centralized or consolidated training was conducted "quite well" and met a definite training need.

Participants were asked under what conditions centralized training was conducted prior to a rotation (Question 6, Appendix B). About 80% identified conditions that related to something "new" impacting the unit, such as new equipment, a new type of unit that must be countered for an upcoming rotation, or the requirement to represent some new type of threat (Table 4). Training was typically conducted in a centralized mode under any of these three conditions.

Table 4
Conditions When Centralized Training is Conducted Prior to a JRTC Rotation

Conditions (interview options presented)	# (%) of Responses
Receiving new equipment	12 (86%)
Facing new type of unit for a rotation	11 (78%)
Representing a new threat	12 (86%)

Note. Other responses were attending the School of Standards ($n = 2$); attending driver training, participating in situational training exercises (STX) lanes, attending CLS classes, attending emergency medical treatment classes, and encountering new mission requirements ($n = 1$ each).

Decentralized Training

As indicated in Table 3, decentralized training was used for training both wartime and OPFOR skills. According to 12 of the participants, the wartime and OPFOR missions required them to operate in team-sized elements, usually in three- to five-man cells. As a result, decentralized training was the most efficient means to prepare them for both missions.

The specific OPFOR tasks trained via a decentralized mode were not requested during the interviews. However, participants identified the sources used to determine what needed to be trained for an OPFOR mission (Question 5, Appendix B). The participants cited the sources shown in Table 5. More than 90% stated the training focused on shortfalls from the last training rotation as well as guidance from higher headquarters. The guidance from higher headquarters could likely be influenced from the previous rotations. However, the training requirements could also be based on external guidance or derived from projected missions in an upcoming training rotation. In addition, over 70% stated they used input from subordinate leaders and their own professional experience. Since the OPFOR units typically conduct internal AARs following missions and each rotation, the leaders can gain input from subordinates at each level and use this information in determining potential training shortfalls.

Table 5
Sources for Determining What Should be Trained for an OPFOR Mission

Sources	# (%) of Responses
Shortfalls - last rotation	13 (93%)
Guidance - higher headquarters	13 (93%)
Input – subordinate leaders	10 (71%)
Own experience	10 (71%)
Previous evaluations	7 (50%)
OPFOR missions	7 (50%)
AAR	3 (21%)

Note. Participants could identify more than one source. Each of the following four sources was cited by only one participant: Iraq combat reports; new mission requirements; observer/ controller comments; hot washes (impromptu information briefings).

Participants also identified the individuals responsible for supervising and conducting decentralized training prior to a rotation (Questions 2 and 4, Appendix B). Table 6 (supervise column) shows that the responsibility for decentralized training was at the platoon level and below. The distribution of responses clearly indicates that more than 70% of the participants stated that decentralized training was supervised by the squad leader, platoon sergeant, or platoon leader. Additional comments were made regarding the responsibility for training. One individual responded that the subordinate leaders knew what needed to be trained better than anyone else. Another indicated that the decentralized training was a shared experience.

While the squad leader, platoon sergeant, and platoon leader were central figures for both supervising and conducting training, the primary person who conducted decentralized OPFOR

training was at a lower level than the primary person who supervised the training, as shown in Table 6. The team leader was identified by 93% of the respondents as a key trainer (Conduct Training column of Table 6). In this regard, most of the individual training was conducted as mentoring and was executed by the Soldier's more seasoned peers, many of whom held the rank of specialist, serving as team leaders. However, the squad leader/section sergeant and platoon sergeant were also key trainers. Several of the NCOs commented that the platoon leader was mainly a supervisor, but became more involved when the platoon was conducting training with both sections or at the platoon level. Although only one participant listed contractors or military subject matter experts, several participants identified battalion-level instructors during the interviews as instrumental for new equipment training, such as the OSV.

Table 6
Responsibilities for Planning and Executing Decentralized Training Prior to a JRTC Rotation

Leader/Duty Position	# (%) of Responses	
	Supervise Training[a]	Conduct Training[b]
Company Commander	--	2 (14%)
Platoon leader	10 (77%)	7 (50%)
Platoon sergeant	10 (77%)	12 (86%)
Squad leader / section sergeant	11 (85%)	12 (86%)
Team leader	4 (31%)	13 (93%)
Senior man / first line supervisor	2 (15%)	--
Communications Sergeant	--	2 (14%)

Note. Participants could indicate more than one duty position.
[a] $n = 13$. One participant stated he did not know the answer to the supervise training question.
[b] $n = 14$

Time Spent on Activities Other than Training

As indicated previously in Table 3, about 27% of the time prior to a rotation was on "other activities." This category refers to activities where Soldiers were unavailable for training with their organization. It included training distractions (e.g., post support details) and lost training time (e.g., such as leave, time off, medical problems, military schooling). The participants indicated that leaves and attendance at schools occur between rotations. Given the robust nature of the OPFOR rotational support requirements, short of emergencies, no leaves are granted and school training is minimized to provide the maximum field strength during a rotation.

Training During a Rotation

One focus area of the interviews was to determine the differences between training prior to a rotation when the units can be centrally located, and during a rotation when the units are very dispersed. Table 7 lists the types and methods of training that typically occur during a rotation (Question 8, Appendix B). All participants indicated that they conducted either all or mostly OPFOR training during a rotation. Five stated that they also accomplished some wartime

mission collective and individual task training. One participant indicated that he conducted on-the-job training for his Soldiers, but did not distinguish between OPFOR and wartime missions.

Table 7
Type and Method of Training During a JRTC Rotation

Type of Training	# (%) of Responses
OPFOR individual / collective mission-oriented training	14 (100%)
Wartime mission training	5 (35%)
Individual on-the-job training	1 (7%)
Method of Training	
Hip-pocket training	12 (86%)
Scheduled training (on unit training schedule) and hip-pocket training	2 (14%)

Note. Participants could identify more than one type of training.

About 85% of the participants indicated that training during a rotation was conducted as hip-pocket training. No one indicated it was documented on a training schedule. Two participants stated that the training was both hip-pocket and scheduled training. This would indicate that guidance from higher echelons, either battalion or company, was provided and the events or training tasks were noted at a training meeting. However, at the squad level and below, all of the participants may not have known the tasks were on the unit training schedule.

Participants reinforced the decentralized nature of both the JRTC mission environment and the OPFOR training. Table 8 shows the leaders identified as responsible for planning the training (determining what tasks to train) during a rotation, and who was responsible for executing the training. It is very clear that the tasks trained and the corresponding planning for those tasks are accomplished at platoon level and below, with the majority of the participants indicating that NCOs had this responsibility. It is worth noting that four participants specifically stated that mission requirements determined what tasks were to be trained.

Table 8
Responsibilities for Planning and Executing Decentralized Training During a JRTC Rotation

Duty Position	# (%) of Responses	
	Planning Training	Executing Training
Battalion/company commander	1 (7%)	---
Platoon leader	6 (43%)	1 (7%)
Platoon sergeant	8 (57%)	2 (14%)
Section sergeant/squad leader	9 (64%)	6 (43%)
Team leader/senior man/first-line supervisor	8 (57%)	11 (78%)

Note. Participants could indicate more than one duty position.

Given the nature of the decentralized operations at JRTC where small cell activities are prevalent, the results on training execution were not surprising. The team leader, senior man, or first-line supervisor were overwhelmingly identified as the critical trainers by nearly 80% of the participants. It is unclear if the selection of the section sergeant/squad leader as the primary

trainers reflects the period of initial field deployment during a rotation that lasts one to two days. In repeated statements, participants identified this window as the period prior to the platoons breaking down into the various cells to complete the rotation requirements. This might also explain why three participants identified the platoon sergeant or platoon leader as responsible for executing the training.

Another important point is that although the OPFOR squad and team leaders were free to determine the content of their training, a major restriction placed by the unit hierarchy was that the squads and teams had to carry any required training aids to a cache site in the vicinity of the training location. If, for whatever reason, that plan was impractical, the required training aids were to be pre-packed and provided to the supply sergeant. The platoon was then responsible for arranging delivery to and from the field training site with the unit supply sergeant.

Participants identified the amount of time typically spent on training during a rotation. Half specified from one to five hours each day; the exact amount of time depended on the current situation. Five (36%) stated that the amount of time was situational-dependent, based on the pace of the rotation, or that as much time as needed was spent conducting this training The responses from the other two participants varied. One stated very little training was conducted; the other stated as much as half of the rotation was spent training.

Participants were also asked if their performance as OPFOR during a rotation was viewed as a training event for themselves, as a training aid for the rotational unit, or both (Question 7, Appendix B). They unanimously stated that their performance during a rotation was both a way to measure OPFOR proficiency to assist units as well as a training event for themselves.

After-Action Reviews (AARs)

One of the goals of the research was to determine what other factors or tools employed by the OPFOR might impact performance. Previous research at the CTCs, including JRTC, indicated that AARs[2] are emphasized as an integral part of training for a unit during its training rotation (Morrison & Meliza, 1999). The question in our interviews was to determine if the OPFOR also emphasized and benefited from routine AARs. Participants were asked if the company commander or the platoon leader conducted an AAR at the completion of a platoon or company mission (Question 7a, Appendix B). Nearly 80% indicated the commander conducted at least one AAR during each rotation and one at its completion. Comments were that platoon-level AARs were conducted "most of the time." Only one individual stated that he received no feedback.

The participants overwhelmingly indicated that the AARs were positive in nature and always stressed areas that need improvement. Only about half the participants indicated the

[2] An AAR is a professional discussion of an event, focused on performance standards, that enables Soldiers to discover for themselves what happened, why it happened, and how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses (TRADOC, 1993). AARs should be planned at the completion of each mission or phase to provide immediate feedback to the Soldiers being trained. They should be positive and focus on what could have been done differently to improve performance. The AAR is a tool leaders can use to increase the training benefit from every mission or task.

AARs addressed what happened and what went wrong. One team leader stated that he did not do AARs at his level. By operating in three- to five-men decentralized cells there are generally more cells than NCO leaders. Hence, a specialist might be serving as the cell leader, with no NCO available to conduct an AAR.

Requisite Skills, Capabilities, or Knowledge Areas for new Soldiers and Leaders

Individuals identified up to ten primary skills, capabilities, or knowledge areas that they felt a new OPFOR Soldier and leader must possess (Questions 9 and 14, Appendix B). The participants provided 29 different responses for a new Soldier; the top ten are in the top half of Table 9. Clearly, the top three choices were weapon and multiple integrated laser engagement system (MILES) training, land navigation, and adaptive thinking.[3] Stated characteristics of adaptive thinking identified in participant responses included, "free-thinker," "demonstrating situational awareness," "thinking on their own," "thinking it out," "independent thinking or thought," "acting independently," "taking charge," and "demonstrating flexibility." Seven other areas in the top ten requisite skills for new Soldiers were given by three to five participants.

Table 9
Requisite Skill, Capability, or Knowledge for new OPFOR Soldiers and Leaders (top ten answers)

New OPFOR Soldiers	# (%) of Responses
Weapons/MILES training	14 (100%)
Land navigation	10 (71%)
Adaptive thinking	9 (64%)
Individual movement techniques	5 (43%)
Common core tasks	4 (28%)
IED training	4 (28%)
Communicate/report	4 (28%)
OPFOR battle drills	3 (21%)
Reconnaissance training	3 (21%)
Know area of operations	3 (21%)
New OPFOR Leaders	
Adaptive thinking	10 (71%)
Technically proficient (Enemy/19D/IED)	10 (71%)
Leadership skills/counseling	6 (43%)
Team building skills	5 (43%)
Tactically proficient	5 (43%)
Weapons/MILES training	4 (28%)
Land navigation	4 (28%)
Initiative	3 (21%)
Communicate/report	3 (21%)
Confidence building	3 (21%)

[3] Adaptive thinking, or cognitive readiness, is defined as the ability of a Soldier to accomplish a mission by making and implementing decisions in a timely, efficient, and effective manner, often with very limited information in a constantly changing, complex, and dangerous environment.

There were 19 different primary skills, capabilities or knowledge areas identified for new OPFOR leaders; the top ten are in the bottom half of Table 9. The top items included adaptive thinking and being technically proficient. Technical proficiency included being aware of the enemy, knowing 19D cavalry skills, and emplacing improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Leadership skills included counseling and knowing Soldiers. Seven other areas in the top ten requisite skills for new leaders were given by three to five participants (see Table 9).

Four requisite skills or capabilities were in the top ten for both new Soldiers and leaders, These were adaptive thinking, land navigation, weapons/MILES skills, and communicate/report. Of these four, adaptive thinking was the most frequently cited by the participants for both Soldiers and leaders, 64% and 71% respectively.

Participants stated that the most common means of determining when both new Soldiers and leaders were ready for their position in the OPFOR was by personal observations by individuals in the chain of command (Table 10). There was less commonality in the other responses for Soldiers and leaders.

Table 10
Techniques Used to Determine if new Soldiers and Leaders are Ready for Their OPFOR Position

Sources for New Soldier	# (%) of Responses
Chain of command observations	8 (57%)
Demonstrates adaptive thinking	4 (28%)
Input from subordinate leaders	4 (28%)
No choice in making determination regarding participation	3 (21%)
Demonstrates performance	2 (14%)
Sources for New Leader	
Chain of command observations	11 (78%)
Ability to accomplish mission	5 (43%)
Demonstrates initiative	3 (21%)
Positive attitude	2 (14%)

Note. Participants could give more than one response. The table includes responses given by at least two participants. Questions 11, 15 and16a, Appendix B.

Interestingly, for Soldiers, three participants stated that regardless of the individual Soldier's status, they had no choice but to have that Soldier participate in the rotation. However, two of these three stated that they would pursue peer mentoring and coaching as a means of helping that Soldier learn and adapt to the OPFOR mission. The two individuals who responded that they would base their determination on demonstrated performance explained that this included proficiency on the situational training exercise (STX) lanes, passing a test on the *Exercise Rules of Engagement*, and being able to correctly zero their MILES. The *Exercise Rules of Engagement* is the guidebook prepared by the JRTC Operations Group that outlines how JRTC battles are fought by battlefield operating system.

Participants indicated that the average number of rotations required for a new Soldier to become fully functional was 4.5 rotations (Question 10, Appendix B). For a new leader (junior officer or NCO) the corresponding mean was 3.7 rotations (Question 15, Appendix B). If one makes the general assumption that each rotation required about a month when the interviews were conducted, these numbers correspond to 4.5 months of dedicated training time for new Soldiers, and 3.7 months of dedicated training time for new leaders.

As a follow-on question, participants were requested to identify the training, preparation, or mentoring that a new subordinate leader should receive before conducting his own decentralized training. All participants stated there was an active mentoring program within the OPFOR. This included coaching from more senior leaders and mentoring by peers and experienced subordinates.

The last question regarding the training of new leaders dealt with the techniques that the OPFOR participants, who were leaders themselves, would employ to overcome subordinate leader deficiencies or weaknesses (Question 16a, Appendix B). All stated that they would use mentoring or coaching, by either personally mentoring the subordinate leader or linking him with an experienced peer to conduct the mentoring and coaching (Table 11). Three other responses (impart personal experience, observe/shadow peer, and provide a role model) also addressed aspects of mentoring and coaching. Formal counseling would be used as a last resort by some leaders.

Table 11
Techniques for Remedying a Leader Deficiency

Technique	# (%) of Responses
Mentoring/coaching	14 (100%)
Impart personal experiences	7 (50%)
Learn skill through experience	7 (50%)
Observe/shadow peer	6 (43%)
Provide role model	4 (28%)
Formal counseling	3 (21%)

Note. Participants could give more than one response. Question 15 in Appendix B.

Leadership Traits and Leader Mentoring Program

The skills or traits that the participants identified as required/desired by a new subordinate leader to execute decentralized training are in Table 12. A total of 12 skills/traits were cited, with the most desirable skill or trait that of demonstrating adaptive thinking. This is understandable given that the OPFOR leaders frequently must make decisions quickly based on their experience and the situation. Adaptability was also stressed as a requisite skill for new leaders (refer to Table 9). Slightly more than half of the participants stated that demonstrating confidence and having a positive attitude were also very important. All areas identified by the participants are in Table 12.

Table 12
Desired OPFOR Leader Skills or Traits for Executing Decentralized Training

Skill or Trait	# of Responses
Adaptive thinking	11 (78%)
Confidence/attitude	9 (64%)
Initiative	7 (50%)
Aggressiveness	4 (28%)
Strong leadership	4 (28%)

Note. Participants could identify more than one skill or trait (Question 16c, Appendix B). Other responses were: Accomplish mission and being tactically proficient ($n = 2$). Improvement, team-building skills, and the ability communicate ($n = 1$ each).

All participants re-affirmed that the OPFOR had an active mentoring program which was conducted within each platoon (Question 17, Appendix B). In describing the mentoring process, four primary features or characteristics emerged (see Table 13). Observation by the individual's chain of command at the platoon level was a unanimous response. Nearly 90% stated that new leaders were given the opportunity to shadow (follow) another more experienced leader. This shadowing process typically lasted for at least one rotation. There was also a concerted effort to match the new leader with an experienced individual. This individual could be a peer or even a subordinate, provided the individual possessed the requisite experience.

Table 13
Features of the OPFOR Mentoring Program

Feature	# (%) of Responses
At platoon level	14 (100%)
Chain of command observation	14 (100%)
Shadow leaders	12 (86%)
Match up with peer	11 (78%)

Note. Participants could identify more than one feature.

Other OPFOR Training

Platoon Cross Training

In response to a general question on cross-training, all participants indicated they cross-trained their Soldiers on platoon equipment. However, when questioned on specific equipment items, the answers did not support that cross-training was conducted with all equipment (Question 13, Appendix B). Various items of platoon equipment along with the number of participants who identified that item are in Table 14. While the intent is to cross-train all platoon members on all or most platoon equipment, this objective might not be necessary or achievable. Several participants, most notably NCOs, did comment on having to prioritize available training time during the rotation. This was particularly true of the time window immediately prior to the unit separating into the small cells. This time is most likely when a new Soldier would be introduced to specific OPFOR equipment and receive cross-training.

Table 14
OPFOR Soldier Cross-Training on Platoon Equipment

Equipment	# (%) of Responses
ADA Weapons	13 (93%)
Rocket-propelled grenade (RPG)	11 (78%)
M16 Rifle	8 (57%)
M249 Squad Automatic Weapon	7 (50%)
M240B machine gun	7 (50%)
IED	5 (43%)
OPFOR vehicles (OSV/M113)	5 (43%)
Weapon Sights/Night Vision Devices	4 (28%)
M60 Machine gun	2 (14%)
MILES	2 (14%)

Note. Participants could identify more than one item of equipment. The M2 50 cal. Machine gun, radios, sniper weapons, and the Call-for-fire trainer (training device) were each cited by one participant.

The high selection rate of RPG training was not surprising since it is a fairly universal system employed world-wide and well replicated on the JRTC battlefield. The high selection of air defense artillery (ADA) systems as a priority item was a bit surprising. Further questioning revealed that this was due to the large number and different types of ADA systems replicated on the JRTC battlefield. The OPFOR fields a vast array of ADA system simulators that replicate various real world ADA threats including the SA7 GRAIL, SA14 GREMLIN, SA16 GIMLET, and SA18 GROUSE. Each of these systems is a portable one-man system. Since the electronic package for each system is different in order to replicate the electronic signature emitted by the system, each requires individual training to operate.

The OPFOR provided some examples of cross-training, hip-pocket training, as well as training initiatives with ADA and other weapon systems. One participant stated that "If the scenario calls for an SA7 and the supply sergeant inadvertently brings out a new SA18, new Soldiers can receive training on the SA18 and use it in lieu of the SA7. All Soldiers can then receive refresher training on the differences between operating the SA7 and the SA18 simulators and their capabilities." Another NCO provided a second example, "If the only M249 SAW in the team breaks down or the gun and gunner are captured, the trainer can conduct a class during a scheduled break on how to offset the loss of the weapon by redistributing the unit's firepower when, for example, conducting an ambush."

It was interesting that so few (14%) participants mentioned MILES training. There may be several potential reasons for the low response. Since the OPFOR has a recurring role, the participants may have assumed that the individual MILES equipment was an integral part of the OPFOR uniform and therefore did not require cross-training. Also participants mentioned that MILES was a prerequisite skill (see Table 9). Confusion may also have been because no distinction was made in the interview between individual MILES equipment and the much more complex vehicular MILES kits. A large part of the OPFOR mission is to provide tactical vehicle

support, OSVs and OSV-MBTs. The participant sample did not include many vehicle commanders, the individuals responsible for ensuring the vehicular MILES kits are fully operational and, hence, those requiring the training.

Most of the platoon equipment cross-training was conducted in a decentralized mode. The answers ranged from 70% to 100% of the training being done in a decentralized mode, with the average being 93%; nine of the 14 participants stated all cross-training was done decentralized. When asked what cross-training was conducted in a centralized mode, nearly half responded that there was no centralized training on platoon equipment. Only four listed OSV training and new equipment training (NET) as centralized; two listed driver training. One individual each listed land navigation, M16 rifle, airborne operations, IEDs, and ADA systems.

Developing Unit Cohesion

Unit cohesion, the bonding of Soldiers in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, to the unit, and to mission accomplishment, despite combat or mission stress, was reviewed as another possible variable that was stressed in OPFOR training. Cohesion is a blend of the social and emotional bonds of friendship, caring, and closeness with a shared commitment among members to achieve a goal that requires the collective efforts of the group or team. Participants indicated that a substantial amount of time was spent on building a cohesive unit. In fact, 10 of the 14 (71%) participants responded, "All the time." Two others stated "As much time as possible." The remaining comments were "a lot time" and "most of the time."

OPFOR Training Challenges

Since the preponderance of training is decentralized, new OPFOR leaders must have initiative to develop the required proficiency as most training in units is centralized. Participants were requested to identify their greatest challenge to becoming an OPFOR leader (Question 19, Appendix B). Two major areas were identified. Eight (57%) participants responded that improving their time management skills, including establishing priorities, was the top challenge. Five (43%) responded that developing the OPFOR mindset was a challenge. Four other comments were made only once: improve adaptive thinking, establish each Soldier's capabilities, dealing with other leaders, and non personal challenges.

The predominant leader challenge, improving time management skills, resulted from the pace of the OPFOR mission. Most participants acknowledged that they understood the thought process before they arrived at JRTC. However, the pace and the sheer number of on-the-spot decisions were initially more than expected. As one OPFOR cadre member said, "You're constantly making decisions faster than you would in a normal environment, getting things prioritized and getting them done within the allotted time." Another OPFOR leader echoed his sentiments, "It's just managing the time that you're given. Sometimes it's kind of hard to take in all the information that fast."

Regarding establishing the proper OPFOR mindset, OPFOR leaders stated it required a different way of looking at things. One OPFOR leader said, "Looking back at my other

assignments, this is certainly a different animal." Still another commented, "I suppose, at first, it's getting used to what it is that we [the OPFOR] do because it's just so unconventional compared to the other Army units I've been in." Another clearly captured the distinctiveness of the OPFOR mentality as compared to that within a unit when he said, "My whole career I've been trained .... to be a Soldier. I get here and I'm wearing civilian clothes in the field [sic and acting like the bad guys]. It is a lot to take in. The challenge is adapting. It's a different culture. It is because of the [sic OPFOR] mission."

In order to determine high-priority tasks for collective training, participants were asked to imagine that they had only 72 hours to train their OPFOR unit on any collective tasks or battle drills, and determine what training they would conduct. The participants (86%) stressed training wartime tasks. This training included ambushes, cordon and search, urban operations, and route reconnaissance. Other tasks were call-for-fire, mounting radios, individual and team movement, operating with the vehicles including mounted squad and platoon operations, reporting, marksmanship, and land navigation. Only three (21%) leaders stated that they would perform some OPFOR-specific training, which included the OSV, OPFOR tactics and tenets, react to contact drill, and conducting cache operations.

Nearly 80% of the participants stated the reason for their training selection was because their current level of training on wartime tasks was "weak" or that the skills were needed to "keep the unit combat ready." Given that the OPFOR spends the majority of its time conducting OPFOR missions, it is understandable that wartime tasks could be at a lower proficiency level. As paraphrased from one NCO, "While being trained as OPFOR instills certain skills and adaptability, this is not sufficient for success in a regular unit. They need to know BLUFOR [sic wartime] skills, especially the more they get promoted. While OPFOR training provides knowledge and makes them more adaptive and flexible, there is still very crucial BLUFOR [sic wartime] stuff that they need."

A second reason for concentrating on wartime training was in the advent of being deployed as a unit for a combat tour. The tone of several comments reflected a combination of professional concerns for their unit and professional concerns for their Soldiers. Clearly, wartime events in Iraq and Afghanistan had an impact. As stated by one NCO, "We thought we were going to deploy and that struck a nerve. A lot of the guys are behind the power curve on a lot of things" (a reference to fine tuning individual wartime Soldier skills not readily practiced by the OPFOR).

When asked how they would prepare for a new OPFOR mission, all stated that they would initially learn about the threat through doctrinal research, intelligence briefings, and also seek information from veteran Soldiers who had served in the theater. Five stated they would identify cultural aspects of the region. Two indicated they would need to identify all necessary skills required for their Soldiers in order to replicate the new threat. Two others stated they would study the commander's intent and the operation order to glean additional information. Two stated that once they had gathered the necessary information they would begin a training program to start instructing their Soldiers on the new mission.

Decentralized Training Applications for Follow-on Duty Assignments

The last section of the interview focused on application of decentralized training within regular Army units. Of interest was what aspects of being a member of the JRTC OPFOR were of value to them, the challenges of executing decentralized training in Army units, and what training should be centralized or consolidated in Army units.

Value From Being a Member of the OPFOR

When asked what aspects of OPFOR training they would take with them for application at follow-on duty assignments, nine (64%) participants cited the advantages of decentralized training. The other participants gave a variety of responses. However, these responses provide some insight into the perceived advantages of being a member of the JRTC OPFOR. Two stated that their improved adaptive thinking process from being an OPFOR would be useful. They felt that adaptive thinking improved their ability to prioritize requirements and, as a result, they were much better at managing available time and could react to change more quickly than before. Two others stated that their OPFOR assignment helped them to better analyze how an enemy fights. One NCO indicated the importance of attention to detail. Another NCO felt he benefited from his OPFOR assignment because the sole focus was on mission execution which reduced the pressure on the leaders, creating an environment that was more conducive to learning.

Decentralized Training in Units

Participants identified the aspects of decentralized training philosophy and procedures that would work in regular units and the echelons where it would be most effective (Questions 26 and 27, Appendix B). (Two participants were not asked any of the questions regarding decentralized training in units because they had not previously served in a regular unit.) Responses were divided between those who believed decentralized training would work in units and those who believed it would not work. Specifically, seven of the 12 (58%) stated that all decentralized training would work in regular units. One of the seven commented that it would all work, but that execution would be harder. One (8%) participant said that most of the decentralized training would work, but recognized there would remain some subjects that would continue to be centralized training. Four (33%) participants responded that decentralized training world not work in regular units. Three of these four stated that there was a negative mindset against decentralized training and that it would not work because the regular units could not or would not accept the transformation to decentralized training. One participant stated that having individuals in the duty position of a corporal or specialist in charge would not work in regular units because they do not have the same level of experience as their JRTC counterparts.

The majority of the participants (83%) indicated that platoon and below would be the best echelons for decentralized training. The other two indicated squad/section echelons as the most appropriate.

With regard to what roadblocks could hinder decentralized training in regular units (Question 29, Appendix B), nine (75%) participants stated that the major obstacle would be the negative mindset against decentralized training. Most commented that decentralized training

was a major shift away from the traditional checks and balances of the current system. As such they expressed concern that the planning, requesting support, scheduling, and assessment cycle would interfere with giving the "unsupervised" NCOs the latitude they need to perform decentralized training.

Another concern was whether the normal unit environment would allow the junior leader the "freedom to fail." A certain level of trust and trial-and-error is required if decentralized training is to succeed. As the OPFOR participants pointed out, when lower enlisted personnel perform tasks above their skill level, mistakes are likely to happen. However, growth also occurs with mistakes, and they felt that this growth would be beneficial in the long-run. Yet, based on their experience, most felt strongly that zero tolerance for failure was the norm in units. Mistakes would cast aspersions on the quality of both the junior leader and his unit.

The second major roadblock noted was obtaining the support and resources necessary to conduct the training. Five (42%) participants stressed that obtaining support, particularly post-level support, would be difficult. Several commented that a company alone lacked the resources to support decentralized training. Most posts require range and support requirements to be requisitioned weeks, sometimes months, in advance. Additionally, obtaining post support is often highly competitive given the limited assets available. One NCO commented that he considered training cycle interference as a major training distracter to conducing decentralized training. This was in contrast to two other NCOs who felt that training cycles would interfere with training, but that interference could be minimized through proper planning.

Three (25%) participants stated that managing available training time would be difficult. They realized that their unit would still be required to participate in the higher-level cyclical training schedule. They expressed concern that the various cycles would interfere with decentralized training. Participants recognized that their company and platoon would have training requirements levied by higher headquarters and would also have internal support requirements for other squad and section training. However, none stated that they felt these obstacles were insurmountable.

One (8%) participant stated that the higher headquarters is responsible for establishing training standards and priorities. He stated that their role in creating standardization (and realistic expectations) was extremely important. He expressed concern whether realistic standards and a check-and-balance system could be implemented that would not be cumbersome; a system that would not result in additional supervisory duties in assessing the training. These standards and priorities do not routinely exist and would need to be created.

Centralized Training in Units

When asked what training should be centralized at company level or higher in Army units (Question 24, Appendix B), the responses were similar to the answers on what was cross-trained at the platoon level at JRTC (refer to Table 16). Nine participants (64%) each identified equal opportunity and driver training. Eight (57%) responded that both NET and CLS should be consolidated. Seven (50%) stated that EIB training should be centralized as it was labor

intensive. Three (21%) stated live-fire range training and airborne operations training should be centralized. Combatives and land navigation were each cited by two individuals (14%).

Summary and Discussion

JRTC Decentralized Training Trends and Findings

As evidenced by the interviews, the OPFOR at JRTC relies heavily on decentralized training for their specific OPFOR skills as well as for their wartime skills. Their experiences provide insights as to how decentralized training might be implemented in other parts of the Army. The major findings from the interviews and the trends regarding what works best for conducting decentralized training are presented in the following paragraphs.

Conducting OPFOR Training and Determining What to Train

Prior to a JRTC rotation, OPFOR team leaders along with the other small-unit leaders, including the platoon sergeant, section sergeant, and squad leader, were the primary trainers. Reflecting the decentralized nature of the JRTC environment, higher-level leaders were involved for only minor time periods. Because the OPFOR at JRTC typically operates in small teams spread over large distances, when training occurs during a rotation period, it is understandable that the senior person present would be responsible for conducting the training. This is a reflection of the decentralized JRTC battlefield and stresses the importance of the decentralized training approach used by the OPFOR.

Selection of training tasks before a rotation was based on four factors: shortfalls from the previous rotation, guidance from a higher headquarters, input from subordinate leaders, and the leader's own professional judgment. Task selection and scheduling were primarily coordinated by the squad leader or section sergeant. The platoon sergeant, team leaders, and often the senior man present/first line supervisor (regardless of rank) identified the training tasks and determined when the training occurred.

Training New OPFOR Soldiers and Leaders

The skills required of a new Soldier were clearly defined as the basic combat skills necessary to perform in a combat unit. These included individual skills to shoot, move, and communicate, as well as adaptive skills and battle drills. Training new Soldiers was decentralized to junior leaders and peers.

Adaptive thinking and technical proficiency were the top skills required for new leaders. These skills, combined with demonstrating confidence and a positive attitude, defined a leader who was prepared to function in the JRTC environment. New leaders had to exert initiative, be aggressive, be tactically proficient, and constantly build their teams.

Techniques for training a new leader were highly decentralized, one-on-one training. Mentoring and coaching the new leader were cited by all those interviewed. Other techniques cited involved having an experienced person, either a senior or a subordinate, impart personal

experiences or having the new person observe/shadow a peer. It was clear that a key ingredient to successful decentralized training was the presence and direct involvement of an experienced trainer or supervisor in the training and development of new leaders.

An interesting comparison emerged concerning the amount of time required to fully train a new OPFOR member and a new OPFOR leader. Participants indicated that a new Soldier was fully functional with the OPFOR after an average of 4.5 rotations, while a new leader (NCO or junior officer) was fully functional after 3.7 rotations. These results were somewhat surprising. In a traditional unit, the number of tasks to be learned by a new Soldier requires less time than for a leader; the NCO or junior officer would have more to learn. However, with the OPFOR mission and decentralized JRTC training environment, new leaders are required to demonstrate adaptive thinking at JRTC and learn more tasks than at a regular unit assignment. The shorter time cited for leaders may reflect the fact that leaders new to the OPFOR arrive with a certain level of expertise and a relative wealth of experience (they are not "blank pages" like the new OPFOR Soldiers), as well as the extensive leader mentoring and coaching process that is in place at JRTC for new leaders.

Challenges for a new OPFOR Leader

The new OPFOR leader faces a variety of challenges. The predominant challenge was that the pace of the OPFOR mission required the leaders to improve their time management skills. The leader had to recognize a problem in its early stages, internalize and establish priorities, weigh potential options, and quickly reach a decision, all at an accelerated pace. Most acknowledged that they understood the thought process before arriving at JRTC, but that they did not realize the full implications of the pace until they were at JRTC. Another major challenge was a difficulty in establishing the proper OPFOR mindset. Leaders acknowledged that it required a different set of skills, a different way of looking at things, an unconventional way of doing things, adapting to a different culture because of the mission.

Just as the new OPFOR leader faces challenges, all leaders will face their own set of challenges as they move between units. The path to improved success is recognizing what is necessary and implementing the actions to overcome the challenges. As cited previously, the technique used at JRTC was to assign a mentor to a new leader. This approach allowed each new leader to have a "personal, experienced assistant" who could share suggestions that had proven successful. This one-on-one technique is a prime example of decentralized training.

Scope of OPFOR Tasks

The OPFOR participants realized there was a deficiency in training for their wartime skills. They stated their wartime skills required more training for the unit to become combat ready. Comments centered on two main reasons for the need to improve their wartime training. One reason for this situation was that OPFOR skills per se and adaptability are not sufficient for success in a regular unit. The second reason was the possibility of being deployed as a unit for a combat tour. Additional skills and expertise inherent to wartime operations were perceived as being needed for a deployment.

Some key points can be deduced from this information. Leaders are aware of the training gaps of their Soldiers and units. They recognize the importance of filling these training gaps, for the benefit of both individuals and the unit. They also recognize that training and preparedness for the current mission will usually take priority over other tasks. However, if leaders are to take care of their Soldiers and units, they must find the time to ensure all necessary training is conducted. Current missions will likely preclude the possibility of having sufficient time to train all tasks in a consolidated or centralized mode. Therefore, leaders must implement means to ensure training is conducted in a decentralized mode. The training must not only include the skills necessary to be successful in their OPFOR missions, but must also prepare the OPFOR unit in their wartime skills in the event of being deployed for an operational requirement.

Decentralized Training at a Follow-on Assignment

Advantages. The majority of the OPFOR indicated that decentralized training had advantages and it should be used as a training approach at a follow-on assignment. Comments included that decentralized training was a way to help young leaders develop skills. Decentralized training would work as long as junior leaders were given the responsibility for the missions and if more senior leaders would trust their subordinates to perform the mission.

Based on their experience at JRTC, the leaders reported they had improved their adaptive thinking processes. This, in turn, improved their ability to prioritize requirements which made them better at managing available time. They said they were able to react to change more quickly, and because the focus was on mission execution, the environment was more conducive to learning. Decentralized training also allowed them to work on unit cohesion.

As acknowledged, these improved skills will be beneficial to the leaders and Soldiers as they move to follow-on duty assignments. They have experienced decentralized training and see the advantages it can offer. They have learned that trusting subordinates to be responsible for training can pay dividends. In sum, these leaders had the belief that decentralized training is good, that it is an effective means to provide skills to Soldiers and leaders, especially when time is constrained, and that they have acquired the foundation to implement decentralized training within their follow-on unit.

Challenges. Although the OPFOR participants were unanimous in stating that decentralized training could work in regular units, only about half felt that the training would actually work because there would be some difficulty in implementation. Most noted that the primary hurdle would be a negative mindset against decentralized training; it is a substantial departure from the checks and balances under the current system.

The perception was that in regular units, the senior personnel could not or would not trust their subordinates to perform decentralized training; "unsupervised" NCOs would not be allowed the latitude to perform the training. There was also acknowledgement that a certain level of trial-and-error was required for decentralized training to succeed. Success would not be uniformly achieved without some NCOs suffering "growing pains" as they matured. Consequently, to adopt or integrate decentralized training in regular units, they felt the Army must once again embrace the concept of "freedom to fail." Most believed strongly that zero tolerance, no

mistakes, was the expected norm by unit leaders. Mistakes and growth were perceived as inextricably entwined; Soldiers and young leaders learn from their mistakes. The OPFOR felt that this process would ultimately pay dividends as these younger Soldiers matured into the next generation of leaders.

All the participants stated they had experienced the negative impact of training distracters (requirements that take Soldiers away from training) in previous assignments. Support requirements are typically levied by higher echelons and include activities such as installation and range cleanup, post police calls, gate security, funeral details, and driver or escort details. The JRTC OPFOR noted during the interviews that their JRTC environment was devoid of many of the training distracters found in regular units.

Another challenge mentioned by about half the OPFOR was that the time required to obtain training resources in regular units, particularly post-level support, would hinder decentralized training. They realized that a company lacked the internal resources to support the numerous decentralized training events that could be conducted almost simultaneously. Obtaining post support is often highly competitive given the limited assets available at an installation. Most posts require range and support assets to be requisitioned several weeks or months in advance. Even with these hurdles, the OPFOR believed that obtaining adequate support assets was possible through proper planning.

The OPFOR did not mention specifically the need for a unit mentoring program to develop young leaders/trainers as a challenge. However, it was clear that the JRTC OPFOR had a strong leader mentoring program, using more experienced leaders or peers, in some instances. Such programs are not necessarily as typical within regular Army units, but would be necessary for decentralized training to be executed successfully.

Considerations for Decentralized Training

JRTC interview results identified several key considerations for the application of both centralized and decentralized training approaches. Although participants were strong in their support for decentralized training, they recognized advantages and limitations, suggesting that a mix of centralized and decentralized approaches is desirable. One approach was not necessarily the best choice, particularly when considering Army-wide application.

Based on the trends from the JRTC interviews and application of the basic tenets of battle-focused training as outlined in FM 7-1 (DA, 2003), five major considerations were identified for the execution of decentralized training. These five considerations were: select the appropriate tasks, use qualified trainers, create an environment conducive to decentralized training, develop assessment approaches, and provide the necessary training support resources. A shortfall in any of these areas could lead to substandard or ineffective decentralized training.

Select the Appropriate Tasks

A point that came through clearly from the interviews is that although decentralized training provides many advantages, it is not appropriate for all tasks. The leaders must

determine which tasks are best trained in the decentralized mode. These typically include most individual skill tasks, small-unit operations, and topics that do not require a technical expert. On the other hand, the latter is an excellent example of where centralized training is appropriate.

Potential tasks for decentralized training. Individual skill tasks and small-unit operations, particularly at the crew, team, squad, and section levels, are the traditional domains of the NCO regardless of MOS, and therefore very suitable for decentralized training. Individual skill tasks are basically tools of the trade based on a particular skill set and the unit's organic equipment. Many are common core tasks trained by first-echelon trainers throughout the Army such as individual movement techniques, move under direct fire, react to flares, perform duty as a guard, communicate via a tactical radio, crowd control, first aid treatments, casualty reporting, camouflage techniques, and weapons training. Minimum requirements include a knowledgeable NCO, the appropriate Soldier Manual (SM), the equipment necessary to complete the task such as weapons, bandages, or a magnetic compass, a few readily attainable or home made training aids, and training devices when appropriate.

Small-unit operations and drills are also the fundamental responsibility of the unit NCO. These are collective tasks that are executed at the crew, team, squad, and section levels. They are usually MOS or unit-specific. The training normally involves the first-line supervisor instructing an infantry squad on conducting a deliberate attack, or an artillery crew preparing to execute a simulated firing mission, or an engineer squad building a defensive obstacle formed by felled trees.

Potential tasks for centralized training. For new tasks, centralized training is generally the most efficient or effective vehicle for the instruction, as it provides information to the largest audience in the most expeditious means available. Coordination time is also minimized. Based on the JRTC interviews, tasks associated with new procedures, new equipment, and portraying a new threat are better handled as centralized training either to the collective group or to representatives selected as trainers. Leaders or training personnel would be trained as subject matter experts (SMEs) and, in turn, be responsible for training their respective sub-elements. The interviews clearly indicated that the first training iteration for new equipment was conducted in a centralized mode. This type of training also includes civilian contractors providing instruction on the latest variants of IED and new equipment training. Although there were clear indications that the OPFOR preferred decentralized training, they still executed centralized training for selected tasks.

There are other tasks that, although they can be performed in a decentralized mode, provide a more cost efficient means of training if they are consolidated at company level or higher and conducted as centralized training. These subjects include tasks requiring a trained SME to conduct technical instruction. Battalion-level examples used by the JRTC OPFOR include the battalion driver training instructor providing instruction on vehicle driver training or the battalion medics teaching combat life saver and advanced first aid training. Training such as EIB and the CTT training that is labor intensive or requires multiple stations would also be better if conducted as centralized training.

Use Qualified Trainers

The proficiency of the individual trainer is critical. As the JRTC OPFOR stated, the key to decentralized training is that the knowledge of the trainer is passed to subordinates and the trainer has the capability to effectively communicate these ideas. Both objectives are well within the purview of today's small-unit leaders. However, junior leaders, because they have less experience, will need guidance and mentoring to develop some skills such as giving AARs, planning training, assessing performance, and providing quality feedback.

The leader does not have to be a walking encyclopedia or doctrinal expert to be effective. What he must possess is a fundamental knowledge of his profession and the ability to access and to utilize the tools of his trade, such as Soldier training publications, SMs, MTPs, technical manuals (TMs), FMs, training aids, and training devices. The availability of reference sources can only improve the leader's capability to acquire the needed information and training techniques from which to base his training.

As indicated in the interviews, the trainer must learn how to efficiently manage time and other resources. Part of being a qualified trainer means having the ability to know what to train, how best to present the material, and how much time might be required to ensure Soldiers have learned the task. A small-unit trainer does not require the same level of instructional skill as a schoolhouse platform instructor, but to be effective, the leader must be able to accurately and completely train Soldiers on the steps and procedures to acquire the necessary skill. Also the leader must be able to diagnose Soldier weaknesses and to assess when the desired level of proficiency has been achieved.

Create an Environment Conducive to Decentralized Training

To maximize the effectiveness of decentralized training, higher headquarters (both company and battalion) must establish a training environment conducive to this training mode. As the OPFOR pointed out, the formal chain of command must not only be receptive to change, but also embrace a new training concept. Hip-pocket training, common to decentralized training at JRTC, must not be viewed as something that is normally expected when time just happens to become available. It can become a focal point of the unit's training program.

Hip-pocket training is not the only means by which decentralized training can occur. As illustrated in prior interviews with the JRTC OPFOR (Dyer et al., 1999), even when a battalion or company goes to the field, some of the training can be conducted in a decentralized mode, which requires leadership and responsibility on the part of the small-unit leader. The illustration provided was as follows:

> When the OPFOR battalion goes to the field, that means there are a 'bunch of little four- or five-man teams everywhere.' Over a period of 5 to 7 days, each sergeant is then responsible for a piece of terrain and training his Soldiers on it: determine the trails, where the routes are, cover and concealment, open areas, best places for ambushes, cache locations, etc. And the leaders are left alone to train. The fire team leader knows that he must get things right, so it is not his fault if something goes wrong in the rotation. The

> fire team skills depend on that leader. The end result .... is that the sergeants at the fire team level are better trained than the BLUFOR. You give them the mission and you send them out and it's on them to go out there and accomplish it. (Dyer et al, 1999, p. III-61).

This illustration was presented in contrast to centralized exercises where a company goes to the field and fights as an entire company. What is also unique about the OPFOR in their role at JRTC, is that the small-unit leader gets immediate performance feedback on the success of his training with each rotation, whereas such consistent and frequent feedback rarely occurs within regular units.

With decentralized training in a regular unit, the battalion and company would become very active as primary training supervisors and facilitators. This role requires dramatically more effort than under the current centralized training method, given the numbers of small units that could be conducting decentralized training concurrently on different tasks. An honest assessment of training requires more involvement than a review conducted by an immediate supervisor. As Collins wrote in his 1978 milestone publication *Common Sense Training*, "There is no activity at any level that does not require supervision and inspection." (p. 30).

As stated consistently in the interviews, the higher headquarters must establish a means of setting and enforcing training objectives and standards. In addition, in the book *Hope is not a Method*, former Army Chief of Staff General Sullivan acknowledged that under today's training system, that focuses on well-defined tasks, conditions, and standards, each combination of unit, terrain, equipment, and weather results in a different outcome, and conditions, in particular, alter a unit's performance of a given task. However, regardless of the change in conditions, standards will not change and that, "the most important element was standards, without which quality performance is meaningless." (Sullivan & Harper, 1996, p. 191).

The battalion and its subordinate companies must establish sources that outline tactical and training performance standards, preferably in formats that can be transmitted electronically. The company and battalion headquarters can become repositories for electronic libraries where training materials or guidance are stored, adjudicated, and made available to subordinate trainers.

Develop Assessment Procedures Applicable to the Decentralized Training Process

Assessments provide an evaluation of the current training that results in the identification of tasks that need to be improved or sustained, and forms a bridge for planning future training. If training is not observed and assessed, there is the tendency for things to fall through the cracks or for standards to fall. Assessment procedures incorporate two separate, but equally important, components: a means of evaluating training and a system to track results. Assessing the training requires periodic inspections. Current assessment procedures focus on centralized training. They are based on platoon and company ARTEP conditions and standards that apply to all types of units, and typically incorporate evaluators who are two echelons above the unit being evaluated.

Developing assessment procedures to support decentralized training would be challenging as they would require modifications to what is currently in place. For example,

assessments would most likely be best performed by members of the immediate chain of command given their normal proximity to the squads. ARTEPs do not exist at the squad level. Training conditions can vary considerably. Several JRTC OPFOR leaders pointed out that they performed spot checks to ensure that the squad leaders had prepared their training outlines and that training was being conducted to standard. It is likely that additional procedures would be required if decentralized training was more common throughout the Army.

AARs were conducted during and after JRTC rotations to provide immediate feedback and stressed areas that needed improvement. AARs, although not a formal assessment technique, are an essential part of performance feedback within the training process. Training small unit leaders to conduct effective AARs could contribute to the decentralized training assessment process within regular units. However, it would also be a challenge for senior leaders, as they would need to mentor junior leaders to enable them to gain the special skills required to conduct effective AARs.

Assessment procedures must be adapted to the manner in which decentralized training occurs. They should track individual Soldier and squad/crew performance and provide feedback to the chain of command. Other benefits from assessment tracking capabilities are their use as a tool for planning future training, and as a source for conducting Soldier performance counseling.

Provide Necessary Training Support Resources

The chain of command must provide and coordinate for the necessary resources to support the training. Resources include the time to prepare and conduct the training, access to the appropriate facilities and equipment needed to perform the training, as well as the support assets such as ammunition, medics, etc. These points were stressed by the JRTC OPFOR leaders as critical to implementing decentralized training in units.

Procedures for smoothly solving conflicting training resource requests must be developed. A user-friendly environment would mean that the higher headquarters (both company and battalion) maintains an appropriate level of resources to support subordinate unit training. This includes coordinating access to and delivering appropriate training aids; allocating ranges and facilities, apportioning training space, and having an adequate amount of equipment necessary to simultaneously support multiple training sites; setting priorities for training; and setting aside the time necessary to conduct the training. Training must be approached with innovative support and an attitude that says, "Not only can we make this happen, but we can make it better."

A Proposed Strategy for Decentralized Training

This section builds on the previous section on the general considerations for decentralized training. Techniques and procedures to consider in implementing a strategy for decentralized training in regular units are cited.

- Army training doctrine (FM 7-0 [DA 2002]; FM 7-1 [DA 2003]) should acknowledge the added value of decentralized training as this mode of training does currently exist. Individual

training and squad and platoon training are /can be executed in a decentralized mode, and are training stepping stones to the culmination of company and battalion missions. Formal acknowledgement of the role of decentralized training in this overall sequence would also recognize its existence and importance in supporting the decentralized execution of military operations and the emerging capabilities provided by new technologies such as the future ground Soldier system.

- Training materials could be redesigned into modular training packages. This would improve the availability of information to small-unit trainers/leaders, and facilitate the opportunities for individual and small unit collective training.

- Electronic information sharing devices like those envisioned for the future ground Soldier systems could aid in the execution of decentralized training development, assessment, and tracking as well as ease the administrative burden on the individual NCO trainers. Squad and platoon leaders could use this medium to request and receive tailored individual and collective task, drills, and supporting training materials as deliverable electronic packages.

- Implementing a decentralized training program means that the company commander, as the training planner and manager and resource manager, is critical to integrating centralized and decentralized training. He must establish a balance between collective training for company-level tasks and those mandated by battalion within the confines of a centralized training program, as well as monitor and track the decentralized training efforts of his subordinate platoons.

- As with the JRTC OPFOR, no decentralized training tasks should be mandated. The company commander can offer guidance, but final task selection would be left to the platoon and squad leaders. These tasks would then be included as part of the company training schedule; identified as platoon or squad level training; and could even be designated as decentralized training to indicate how it is to be planned and conducted.

- Hip-pocket training is applicable to regular units. It can be considered as improvised or alternative training, that is, training conducted in lieu of the planned instruction, as occurred with the OPFOR. This approach is sometimes referred to as a "bump plan" (Zipperer, Klein, Fitzgerald, Kinnison, & Graham, 2003). Even though hip-pocket and opportunity training should be standards-based, performance-oriented, and battle-focused, the OPFOR stated the training itself is only limited by the imagination and initiative of the trainer.

- As reported by the JRTC OPFOR, getting the appropriate training aids and support to and from the field for decentralized training requires special planning. It would be difficult for regular units if every squad/platoon were responsible for coordinating its own support requirements; the resource scheduler would be inundated with requests. One solution might be to continue sending to battalion the training support requests that required battalion or higher level coordination or assets. However, the request would contain alternative training tasks and support requests should the originally desired training support prove unavailable. Training NCOs in both the company and the battalion S3 staff would continue to act as the interface and provide the required information to the platoon and squad trainers.

- Mentoring and coaching by a first-line supervisor or even a peer can be the primary decentralized training technique for both leaders and Soldiers. Such training often entails shared knowledge based on individual and unit experiences, amounting to captured lessons learned (Zipperer, et al., 2003). Yet this shared knowledge is typically internalized and not shared or documented in a formal manner with other units or even subsequent leaders. If it were captured electronically in unit SOPs, through TTP, or in "training tips," it would then be available throughout the command for use as appropriate. Such information could also be valuable for centralized training.

- Evaluating decentralized training creates a new and difficult challenge. The time-honored technique of a battalion headquarters reviewing training schedules, selecting potential training to review, and sending an observer to review the training will not work in a decentralized environment, especially if the training is conducted during a general timeframe of "down time."

- The role of the higher headquarters becomes less of an "institutional" evaluator and more of an establisher of performance standards. The standards should mirror approved battle drills and MTPs, with the higher headquarters establishing guidelines for training frequency. Subordinate units must determine what is expected of trainers, how tasks/information is to be taught, what are the performance measures, and what is the desired end state. Regardless of the difficulty of evaluating training, the battalion headquarters cannot ignore its role as training evaluator, as the fidelity and effectiveness of the training must continually be examined.

- In terms of on-site assessments, the company commander would probably observe as much squad/platoon level training as possible, with a realistic goal of say 20% of the squad-level training. This would require more coordination than normal. The unit SOP could specify that the platoon leader, platoon sergeant, or another squad leader monitor the training if the commander cannot be present. An evaluation source (such as an ARTEP MTP or Soldiers' Manual) would be required to assess the training. These evaluation sources could be filed in the unit training room or stored electronically for reuse by other leaders.

- The results of performance assessment must be documented. In that regard, decentralized training requires that NCOs track the performance of each of their Soldiers on common and critical tasks. With centralized procedures, the company training schedule basically negates the need this requirement as everyone follows the training schedule and is trained to the specified tasks. Soldier job books, which were used prior to the 1990s, leader books, established in FM 7-1 (DA, 2003), or modified battle rosters (FM 7-1, DA, 2003) could be used/modified to accomplish this purpose. Leader books might also be incorporated in future ground Soldier systems, allowing leaders to automatically transfer data via e-mail to a unit data base. Regardless of the technique, the tracking results should be in a unit database stored at either the company or battalion level, for access to and updating by leaders at different echelons.

Conclusions

The JRTC OPFOR has demonstrated that decentralized training is an effective and often essential means of training small units and their leaders to high levels of proficiency. It is more

than just incidental or opportunity training. Two facets of the interview results were very clear. First, the best level for integrating a decentralized training program is at the company level and below. Secondly, many tasks are not suitable to be conducted as decentralized tasks because they require technical support, are manpower or labor intensive, or are better suited for centralized training. Therefore to maximize the training benefits, a training program must include both decentralized and centralized training, and an appropriate balance must be found.

There are challenges with integrating decentralized training throughout the Army. One challenge is preparing NCOs for their new roles and broader responsibilities inherent in a decentralized training environment. There is a strong leader mentoring program at JRTC which facilitates growth as a leader and trainer, yet is not routinely implemented in regular Army units. Second, the OPFOR participants acknowledged that in regular units training support limitations at the company level and the difficulty in obtaining needed post level assets such as ranges and medical support could adversely impact the desired training. The OPFOR participants were positive, however, that these concerns could be overcome through chain of command involvement and solid leadership. Third, the OPFOR participants expressed concern that it could be difficult for unit leaders to embrace the concept of allowing junior leaders the autonomy to err as they acquire their training skills and grow as leaders.

With these challenges, why should the Army be interested in reestablishing decentralized training into existing training doctrine? As indicated, well-executed decentralized training is a successful training approach. Decentralized training, as envisioned in this report, formalizes the well-known processes of hip-pocket and opportunity training, places the training formally into the unit training schedule and allows the chain of command to review, assess, and track the status of the training. It provides a growth opportunity for junior NCO leaders to develop both leader and trainer skills, and a means of enhancing small-unit cohesion. The NCO is more involved in how his men will be trained and assessed. A decentralized training approach provides total involvement. It gives the NCO true ownership of the training, much as von Steuben originally envisioned, moving training back to "sergeants" business, Lastly, decentralized training is enabled by advances in technology and is consistent with, if not essential to, the decentralized operations that characterize the current operating environment.

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Appendix A

Acronyms

AAR	after-action review
ADA	air defense artillery
ARI	U.S. Army Research Institute
ARTEP	Army Training and Evaluation Program
ASPG	Army Strategic Planning Guidance
ATT	Army Training Test
BFV	Bradley Fighting Vehicle
BLUFOR	Blue Force (friendly unit)
BN	Battalion
CLS	Combat Life-Saver
CTC	Combat Training Center
CTT	Common Task Test
DA	Department of the Army
EIA	Excellence in Armor
EIB	Expert Infantryman Badge
ET	embedded training
EO	Equal Opportunity
FM	field manual
FTX	field training exercise
GSS	Ground Soldier System
HASC	House Armed Services Committee
HMMWV	high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle
IED	improvised explosive device
IN	Infantry
JRTC	Joint Readiness Training Center
MILES	Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System
MOS	military occupational specialty
MTP	mission training plan
NCO	noncommissioned officer
NET	new equipment training

O/C	observer/controller
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OPFOR	opposing force
OSV	OPFOR Surrogate Vehicle
OSV-MBT	OSV Main Battle Tank
RPG	rocket-propelled grenade
SM	Soldiers manual
SME	subject matter expert
SOP	standing operating procedure
STT	sergeants' training time
STX	situational training exercise
TM	technical manual
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
TTP	tactics, techniques, and procedures
UN	United Nations
VOLAR	Volunteer Army

Appendix B

JRTC Biographical Survey and Interview Protocol

U.S. ARMY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Permanent Party OPFOR Decentralized Training Interview

Background: In the spring of this year, 2004, U.S. Army Research Institute (ARI) researchers from Fort Benning interviewed several members of the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) opposing force (OPFOR) regarding Soldier and leader adaptability. In addition, in the 1990s, ARI researchers from Fort Benning interviewed the OPFOR regarding the conduct of night operations and the training methods used to train their personnel for night operations. In these prior interviews, the individuals surveyed stressed that they used decentralized training as a means of preparing for the Blue Force (BLUFOR) rotations.

Purpose. The purpose of this interview is to explore in more depth how this decentralized training is executed, the type of training involved, and the advantages and disadvantages of this type of training. We will also ask some questions on how the OPFOR trains to meet "normal" duty Army or BLUFOR requirements.

For statistical purposes and in order to conduct the interviews, we ask that you provide your name, duty position, and unit. **Full confidentiality will be maintained in the processing of all data. We appreciate your cooperation and the time devoted to this effort.**

Name _____

OPFOR Duty Position _____

Unit _____

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Public Law 93-573, called the Privacy Act of 1975, requires that you be informed of the purpose and uses to be made of the information collected.

The Department of the Army may collect the information requested in this interview under the authority of 10 United States Code 137. Providing information is voluntary. Failure to respond to any particular questions will not result in any penalty.

The information collected in the interview will be used solely for research purposes. Names are requested only for tracking and control purposes. Your responses will be held in strict confidence. No one outside the research team will have access to individual data.

SECTION I. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Please complete Section I prior to the interview.

1. Rank _____. Duty MOS_____.
   PMOS/Specialty _____. Age _____.

2. Please indicate how long you have served in the following:

   The Army _____ years/months.
   Your current grade _____years/months.
   Your current OPFOR duty position _____months.

3. If you have served in other OPFOR positions, please list those and the amount of time in each:

Position	Time (months)
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. If you have served in other positions at JRTC, please list those and the amount of time in each:

Position	Time (months)
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. Circle the number of rotations you have completed as a member of the JRTC OPFOR, regardless of duty position.

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 or more

6. Please list the units/locations where you have served in chronological order (most recent assignment first). For example, 101st ABN, Fort Campbell, KY or 3/24 INF (MECH), Fort Benning, GA.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

7. Please identify your military status. Circle the correct response.

   Active Duty NG on Active Duty USAR on Active Duty

8. Do you have any combat experience (circle)? Yes ***or*** No

9. If you do have combat experience,

Where:	When:	Duty Position:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

If you are an officer, please complete all remaining questions. If you are an NCO, please go to question 14 to complete the biographical section of the survey.

10. Please identify your source of commission. Please circle appropriate response.

OCS USMA ROTC USAFA Direct Commission

11. Date of Commissioning: _____ Branch (IN, SC, MI, QM, etc.)_____

12. Are you Prior Enlisted? (circle) Yes ***or*** No

13. If *Yes*, what was your enlisted MOS? _____ Your highest enlisted rank? _____

14. You normally associate your mission as a member of a line unit conducting combat operations. However, there may have been times in your military career where you performed other types of missions. Please check (√) all that apply and identify the location.

Humanitarian Aid _____	If so, where? _____
Natural Disaster Relief _____	If so, where? _____
UN/Peace Keeping OPS _____	If so, where? _____
Counterdrug OPS _____	If so, where? _____
Noncombat Evacuation _____	If so, where? _____
Law Enforcement Support_____	If so, where? _____

15. If you attended JRTC as a member of a BLUFOR unit undergoing training at JRTC, identify your duty position for each rotation.

Rotation 1 _____	Rotation 4 _____
Rotation 2 _____	Rotation 5 _____
Rotation 3 _____	Rotation 6 _____

16. Have you ever been assigned as permanent party at any CTC?

If so, where? _____	How long? _____ years/months.
If so, where? _____	How long? _____ years/months.
If so, where? _____	How long? _____ years/months.

SECTION II. Interview Questions

Note. Gray highlighted sections are instructions to the interviewer.

In previous interviews with the JRTC OPFOR, ARI researchers from Fort Benning have observed a pattern of responses where the individuals surveyed stressed that they used decentralized training as a means of preparing for the Blue Force (BLUFOR) rotations. This survey specifically attempts to capture that information.

"Before we begin the interview, I'm _____from Northrop Grumman Corporation. I am interviewing _____. _____, do you have any objections to this interview being taped?"

For the purposes of this interview, *decentralized training* is training that was initiated, planned, and executed at the platoon or squad level and below without requirements or guidance from a higher headquarters.

(Do not read)Part 1. General Questions on OPFOR Training in Preparation for a Rotation.

First, I will ask some general questions on the OPFOR and their actions in preparing for a rotation.

1. Does the 1st BN 509th IN consolidate all non-OPFOR training requirements? For example, does one company conduct M16 annual qualification, another 50 Cal machinegun training, and the battalion coordinate all common core training, EIB testing, and other annual training requirements?

Likely follow-on question: "How well does the battalion consolidate these annual training requirements?"

2. What are the primary reasons for conducting decentralized training as a means for preparing for BLUFOR rotations?

Likely follow-on question: "Who supervises this training?"

"I am going to give you a card to provide your answers for the next 3 questions."

*3. What percentage of time would you say is typically spent between rotations on training U.S. Soldier-specific or BLUFOR skills/tasks, OPFOR skills/tasks, and performing other activities (leave, time off, medical, schooling, TDY, etc.)?

BLUFOR skills/tasks _____%
OPFOR skill/task _____%
Other Activities _____% (These 3 percentages should total 100%)

Of the BLUFOR training, what % is decentralized; what % is centralized?
Decentralized ____%
Centralized ____% (These 2 percentages should total 100%.)

Of the OPFOR training, what % is decentralized; what % is centralized?
Decentralized ____%
Centralized ____% (These 2 percentages should total 100%.)

*4. Who is typically responsible for OPFOR training prior to a rotation? Please indicate those individuals responsible for conducting OPFOR training.

_____ Team Leader
_____ Squad Leader
_____ Platoon Leader
_____ Platoon Sergeant
_____ Company Commander
_____ Others, please specify

_____
_____
_____

*5. How do you determine what needs to be trained for an OPFOR mission? Please indicate all that apply.

_____ Shortfalls from last rotation
_____ Guidance from higher leaders
_____ Input from subordinate leaders
_____ Your professional experience
_____ Previous evaluations
_____ OPFOR METL tasks
_____ Other: _____
_____
_____

6. Of the following, if centralized training is conducted in preparation for a rotation, under what conditions is centralized training done? ***(ask these particular points, and let them respond with others)***

_____ For new members of the OPFOR at the JRTC OPFOR Academy?
_____ When you are issued or use new equipment?
_____ When you face a new type of BLUFOR unit, such as a Stryker battalion?
_____ When you must depict a new threat that differs from what you have represented in the past?
_____ Are there other instances? If so, please specify.

(Do not read) Part 2: Training During a Rotation.

The next series of questions is on the training you conduct during a rotation.

7. Is a rotation viewed as a way of measuring or assessing OPFOR proficiency or performance, as a training event, or both? Please explain.

Likely follow-on question: "Does the company commander or the platoon leader provide feedback during an AAR at the completion of a platoon or company mission?"

"I am going to give you a card to provide your answers for the next series of questions."

*8. What type of training do you conduct during a rotation?

a. Who determines what tasks will be trained and when they will be trained?

b. Are these tasks placed on a training schedule or taught as hip pocket instruction?

c. Who is responsible for executing this training?

d. How much time is typically spent on this training?

e. How is this training typically conducted?

(Do not read) Part 3: Training New Soldiers.

Now I will focus on questions concerning how you train new Soldiers.

9. What are the primary skills or capabilities that an OPFOR Soldier must possess? ***(Write the skills that the Soldier provides in the blocks listed in Question 10.)***

10. For each of the skills you just mentioned, if a new Soldier does not possess this skill, what have you found is the best technique for remedying the deficiency or weakness? Do you use decentralized or centralized training techniques? (List what Soldier said so that you can use for question #15, if necessary. If the Soldier has problem, provide items such as first aid, adaptive thinking, weapons training, ambushes, withdrawal under pressure, team building, land navigation, terrain association, battle drills, patrolling, individual movement, common core tasks for his consideration.)

Skill 1 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 2 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 3 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 4 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 5 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 6 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)

Description of training _____

_____

_____

Skill 7 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)

Description of training _____

_____

_____

Skill 8 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)

Description of training _____

_____

_____

Skill 9 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)

Description of training _____

_____

_____

Skill 10 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)

Description of training _____

_____

_____

11. How do you determine when a new Soldier is ready for his position in the OPFOR?

12. How many rotations does it typically take for a new Soldier to perform at a fully functional level? (circle #) (Soldier must provide exact number, not "3 or 4".)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 more than 10

13. From prior interviews, we know that you conduct cross-training. Are Soldiers cross-trained on all equipment issued to the platoon?

a. If **yes**, what is that equipment?

b. If **no**, what equipment do you focus on?

c. Of this cross-training, what percentage is decentralized training? _____%

d. What cross-training is done in a centralized mode? How is it done?

(Do not read) Part 4: Leader Training.

Now, I will ask you similar questions on how you train new leaders.

14. What are the primary skills or capabilities that an OPFOR leader must possess? ***(Write down the skills that the Soldier provides in Question 15.)***

15. For each of the skills you just mentioned, if a new leader does not possess this skill, what have you found is the best technique for remedying the deficiency or weakness? Do you use decentralized or centralized training techniques? (If the Soldier has problems, provide items such as first aid, adaptive thinking, weapons training, ambushes, withdrawal under pressure, team building, land navigation, terrain association, battle drills, patrolling, individual movement, common core tasks for his consideration.)

Skill 1 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 2 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 3 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 4 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 5 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 6 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)
Description of training _____
_____
_____

Skill 7 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)

Description of training _____

_____

_____

Skill 8 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)

Description of training _____

_____

_____

Skill 9 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)

Description of training _____

_____

_____

Skill 9 _____ Decentralized or Centralized? (circle)

Description of training _____

_____

_____

16. Decentralized training places much responsibility on junior leaders. You must trust them to execute tasks often reserved for more senior individuals.

a. What training, preparation, or mentoring should subordinate leaders receive in order to conduct their own decentralized training?

b. How do you determine if a junior leader is ready?

c. What skills or traits do you look for?

17. Is there a leader mentoring process? If so, please describe.

18. How many rotations does it typically take for a new leader to perform at a fully functional level? (circle #) (Soldier must provide exact number, not "3 or 4".)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 more than 10

19. What was your greatest training challenge when you became an OPFOR leader?

(Do not read) Part 5: Collective Training/Battle Drills/Assessment.

The next series of questions is on collective training.

20. You have just been told that you have 72 hours to train your unit on any collective tasks or battle drills that you want.

a. What would you train?

b. Why would you select these tasks or drills?

c. How would you do this training?

Likely follow-on question: "Who does the assessment?"

21. How do you prepare your unit for a new OPFOR mission (e.g. Afghanistan threat, Iraqi terror threat, influx of urban OPS situations, world-wide terrorism, etc.)? Please provide examples of effective training techniques.

22. What do you stress during your after-action reviews (AARs)?

23. How much time do you spend on team-building to build a cohesive unit?

(Do not read) Part 6: General Questions.

And now, I have a few final questions.

24. What training should not be decentralized --- in other words, training that should be taught at post, battalion, or company level, and why?

25. When you go to your next unit, what will you take with you on what you've learned about training in the OPFOR?

Only ask questions 25 through 29 if the person being interviewed has indicated that he served in regular units prior to his assignment at JRTC.

Please answer these last 4 questions based on your prior experience in regular units.

26. What aspects of decentralized training philosophy and procedures would work in a regular unit? ***(Follow-up as necessary)***

27. What procedures would **not** work?

28. At what echelons would decentralized training be most effective in a regular unit?

29. What are the roadblocks to conducting decentralized training in regular units? ***(Try to get 3-5 roadblocks.)***

That completes the survey on decentralized training. At this time, I would like to thank you for participating in the survey. Again, thank you and good luck!